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FANTASTIC

VOL. 7 NO. 9

IN THIS DARK MIND



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fantastic

SEPTEMBER 1958

Volume 7 Number 9

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PAUL W. FAIRMAN

Managing Editor

CELE GOLDSMITH

Fact Editor

ELLERY LANIER

Art Editor

SID GREIFF

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WE'RE THINKING OF CHANGING OUR NAME TO—

—the *Ziff-Davis Fiction & Air-Conditioning Group*; this as a result of a letter we received from a very nice New York City lady who has read *Fantastic* for a long time. She wrote: . . . and I can't thank you enough for your August cover—the one with Satan walking through the snow toward the house at the foot of the hill. Such a delightfully cool idea! I am one of less fortunate wage slaves who must labor in a non-air-conditioned office, and during this latest hot spell you've been a real savior. I cut the August cover off the magazine and pasted it on a cardboard surface and thumb-tacked it to the wall over my desk. The results were miraculous! I'll swear that every time I looked at it, the temperature dropped ten degrees. Oh, that lovely snow . . . Which gives us an idea. We're already working on a blazing hot cover for that sub-zero spell due next January.

A few local news items: G. L. Vandenberg, the author of *Call Me Monster*, in this issue, leads a double life. He is also an actor and will be off—August 1—on a summer stock tour with Jan Sterling in a production of Agatha Christie's *The Spider's Web*—first presentation in this country. If he hits your town, drop in on him and say hello. Say hello to Jan, too. Incidentally, Gordon is working on a real s-f thriller for us. It's titled, *Dead Man In a Space Suit*, but we don't know, as yet, whether it will appear in *Fantastic* or *Amazing*. We're thinking of coining a motto for the senior magazine of the Z-D Fiction Group—*Amazing Science Fiction Stories*, that will go something like this: *Old Amazings Never Die—They Just Keep Popping Back*

(Continued on page 123)



Hatred, violence and death became the

*All the injustices of his past
crowded in on him—changed
him—until he could only snarl
at the world and scream,
“Okay! Go ahead—”*

CALL ME MONSTER

By G. L. VANDENBERG

ILLUSTRATOR SUMMERS



order of things.

HE CROUCHED in the corner of the closet, a frightened shriveled up little creature. He hugged his knees close to his trembling body. In his pathetic desperation he wanted to become smaller and smaller until he would be nothing. For, in the torment of those days and hours, in which, he was sure, centuries had passed, becoming nothing was the only escape he could conceive of.

In the forbidding blackness Time and Space were smothered until he imagined he was no longer in the closet. He was lost. Lost in a terrifying, desolate corner of the Uni-

verse, in whose cruel blackness not even the eyes of God could see.

Lost and alone and having nothing, no one to turn to, he wanted to cry. But fear was his master. And the instruments of fear were sadistic and deceptive. They replaced the torment in his sensitive mind with a moment of pride and courage. He was a big boy now and too old to cry. He would be eleven years old in two months, if Time ever began for him again, and now he must be brave and not cry.

She would not like that. She wanted him to cry and if he didn't she might keep him there forever. But he wouldn't cry. He would remain crouched. And the terror would mount. And he would wait, wait for the one excruciating moment she knew he was waiting for. More than anything else he hated the frustrating moments (or was it years or days or months?) of waiting and not knowing when!

Then, after all the time that had ever been had passed, and it seemed eternity was behind him, she would remove the adhesive tape from the keyhole. A tiny speck of light would gush through, as though God had hurled a star into the

midst of his black loneliness, to warm a silent tear on his cold and forgotten face.

Then the door would open. An ocean of blinding light would fall in upon him, forcing him to hug the bare wall and bury his head deep in a corner. He would hear her foot tapping on the hard floor and the terror would multiply a million-fold. When he turned his head and conditioned his eyes to the stinging glare she would be standing there, an ugly vision of triumphant smugness. She would have her arms stiffly folded and her head cocked to one side. He would see the tight grotesque grin and the pale fleshy step-ladder of chins that hung loosely above her lace collar. She was a giant of a woman, straight as a steel rod and impenetrable. He could not remember ever seeing her smile.

His father had taught him it was not right to hate. It was only easy. The gift of divine forbearance was something a man should never lose.

He wanted very much, in these awful times of punishment, to hate his Aunt Sarah. But the still fresh memory of a tolerant, warm-hearted old man, whose passing he deeply mourned, was ever present to guide him toward a form of forgiveness.

He would emerge from the closet, stiff and hungry. When she asked if he had learned his lesson he would say yes, though he never was quite sure what the lesson was. In the sanctuary of his own soul he would forgive her. He would tolerate her. But he would never in his lifetime come to understand the insane logic of her discipline.

For Jeffrey Barton the closet remained a coherent, throttling reality. He accepted the punishment and the restrictions she placed upon him. Yet, even as his young mind experienced the first rewards of flexibility, he still failed to comprehend the logic of her action.

He could not conceivably be as different from other children as she seemed to think he was.

"Sinful! Sinful! A child with your background!" was her reaction when she caught him chewing bubble gum.

Possession of a sling shot brought a more vehement reaction. "A barbaric instrument! You dishonor your father's grave! Infidel! Little infidel!"

And, for sneaking off to play with the kids on Front Street: "Animals! They're nothing but animals! Dirty little street

urchins who'd murder you as soon as look at you! How your mother would grieve for you, cheapening yourself this way. You have a little of the animal in you, young man!"

His days stretched into weeks, his months into seasons and years.

And, as Aunt Sarah clipped the wings of Time, she cruelly accelerated the torment of his mind. She was racing the motor while the automobile was standing still. He could not realize he would never be free from 'sin' because 'sin' was anything she chose to make it.

Inevitably the time arrived when he realized it was no longer possible to endure the agony. He would never be able to please her. She was an impregnable fortress that, spiritually and mentally, existed in a world he could not reach, a world totally alien to the one his father had brought him into.

In his pathetic capitulation, unaware that even Aunt Sarah could not bring Time to a standstill, he foresaw for himself a life of exile in the closet; a chamber of horrors in which there would be no peace of mind; and finally a tomb in which there would be *eternal* peace of mind.

It was on a cold, rain-swept

October afternoon that a germ of hope reentered his life.

Obedying instructions from his guardian he went to the library, which constituted a separate wing of the house. Aunt Sarah was seated behind the great oak desk that had been his father's. Her hands were primly folded on the blotter in front of her. Her face, as his conscious memory had always known it, bore no expression.

"Sit down, Jeffrey. Take your hands out of your pockets."

She rarely completed a sentence without criticizing him for something. This was her most dominant characteristic and in seven years he had come to loathe it.

He obeyed. He always obeyed.

When he was seated and his hands were folded properly on his lap, she began.

"Jeffrey, you have reached the age of sixteen. If you can learn the lesson of goodness and self-discipline there might someday be valid reason to believe you are an intelligent, growing young man. You are too old now to be placed in the closet for your sins."

It was impossible for him to hold back the smile that parted his lips.

"I wouldn't consider this news as cause for jubilation just yet. There is no reason for me to believe you won't continue to live as errantly as you have in the past . . ."

"Yes, Aunt Sarah."

"Don't interrupt." She gave her hands an angry twist. "Personally I don't believe your confinement to the closet has ever taught you a blessed thing. So you must understand that you will not be immune from punishment when you misbehave in the future. Quite the contrary. The penalty is liable to be even more severe. After all, you may (as well face it), you're old enough to know better now."

She went on talking but he was unable to hear her. The severity of future punishment bore no impact. She could draw upon every source of energy in her versatile, pestilent mind and never be able to devise anything as strangulating as the closet had been to him. An unspeakable joy crept through every fiber of his being.

Several million dollars.

The words dashed themselves against the first tender thoughts he had enjoyed in seven years. For a moment all was confusion. Then he was aware that she was still talking, saying something about

an enormous amount of money. He listened.

"... and your father was the dearest, kindest person I ever knew in this world. I gave my sacred word to him that you would be reared in the same Christian tradition that has brought dignity and honor to the Bartons since they first landed on these shores. You must realize your father was an immensely wealthy man. Exactly *how* wealthy is not your business at the moment. When you become twenty-one every last penny of that wealth will be yours. And my job will be finished. I pray to God in Heaven that you will take advantage of the upbringing I've given you and uphold your father's good name."

Jeffrey wished she would stop praying to God in Heaven and just tell him *how much* money. He quickly forgave himself for the irreverence of the wish and went on half-listening, half-dreaming as she concluded her lecture.

Two such surprises in one day came close to erasing the bitterness of seven years. But not quite close enough. For as he approached the door on his way out of the library, something impelled him to turn and look at his aunt. She was still sitting at the desk, rigid as

always. For just a split second an infinitesimal smile played on her pale lips. Then her face was without expression again. In that moment, in his freshness of mind, Aunt Sarah took on a new aspect.

How curious, he pondered, that on the day she was obliged to inform him of his inheritance she also chose to dispense with the use of the closet.

For the first time in his brief life Jeffrey Barton had a thing to look forward to. Time itself responded to his rejuvenation by resuming a normal pace. That, by Jeffrey's standards, was something akin to lightning-like swiftness.

The five years were by no means pleasant. Only fast.

As a human being Aunt Sarah did not show any improvement. She did grant him limited freedom of movement but her warped devotion to discipline remained unchanged. Chastisement was still available in a variety of forms and for an even wider variety of reasons. She continued to passionately chisel away at his sanity.

At the age of eighteen Jeffrey was thrust headlong into the social arena, a part of his life which had been in the planning stages for as long as

Sarah had been his guardian. How many times had that strident horn of a voice pummeled his ear drums, stressing the importance of his future social obligations? And how many times had two days banishment to the closet of correction blighted his comprehension of that importance?

He understood now the *why* of the closet. He understood but he would never forgive. He understood the discipline, the ruses, the doctors, the tutors, the insipid poise lessons. He understood that all these were necessary to paste together a synthetic body with a remote controlled brain, both to function in a manner befitting his station in life.

But Aunt Sarah had committed a grave strategic error.

The closet.

There was no forgetting that.

His twenty-first birthday was a social event of grandiose proportions. He was the center of attention in Hamilton Square, the axis around which the social set rotated. Overnight he had become everybody's *best* friend. He had, as Aunt Sarah informed him five years earlier, inherited "every last penny" of the Barton fortune. There wasn't a richer man in the city of Salem.

Vera Stevens was a vital part of the long range plans Aunt Sarah had worked out for him. It had never been mentioned but he supposed Vera would someday be his wife just as she would someday be the richest woman in Salem.

But somehow Vera did not disturb him as much as the others. She was a trifle haughty and prone to shock at the flimsiest display of bad taste, but she showed understanding and consideration. He wanted nothing more than that.

It was at Vera's lawn party that he thought back over the last five years. He recalled the many times, when he should have been studying or practicing the piano, but was actually dreaming of the revenge he would someday wreak upon his oppressor. How succulent and cleansing revenge would be, he told himself.

The birthday came as a major letdown.

He sought no revenge. Alarm spread through him when he realized he never would.

And there was no release. He felt no more freedom than he had ever known.

He was astonished and disenchanted and then angry. He

had been so sure that Aunt Sarah had full knowledge of his intended retribution. She would tremble as he approached her on *his* day. He would delight in telling her he was cutting her off without a cent and putting her in the street. Every part of him would glow with radiant joy as she fainted dead away at the news.

There was no joy. She did not tremble or faint away. He did not cancel her long established allowance.

As a meager substitute he merely escorted her away from the other guests, saying he wished to speak with her. When they were alone he made a determined effort to unnerve her. His eyes narrowed into a resentful stare. His mouth was taut, ready to spring open to release his imprisoned feelings. A long, terrible moment passed.

She waited. Not a muscle moved in her grim withered old face. Another moment. He grew rigidly tense. He stuffed his hands into his pockets to conceal clenched fists. He did not speak.

She did.

"You needn't play cat and mouse with me, Jeffrey. Speak your piece and be done with it. And take your hands out of your pockets."

He spoke but his words were without meaning. Their positions were reversed, he told her. He felt there was room enough in a twenty seven room house for both of them but he would appreciate it if she kept out of his affairs. He would *appreciate* it! How could he use such a word with her? How polite could he be with the person who had so utterly disengaged his individuality?

He had spoken his inadequate piece and now he watched as she walked, proud and erect, back to the guests at the lawn party. She had not even answered him. Her face had not revealed the slightest sign of disturbance or surprise. Nothing. She knew all along he would want his revenge. He was right about that. But she also knew, when the moment came, he would fail. Why did she know! What in God's name was the extent of the injury she had done him!

He stood there gazing after her, his mind frozen with a fear he had once known and thought he would never know again. He wanted to run after her, throw her to the ground so he could tower over her and tell her to get out of his life. He didn't do it. He only felt

like a poor fool, thinking of dominance in terms of height. Aunt Sarah thought of it in terms of power. She was right.

The money was his. The position, the mansion, the luxuries, the friends, the tradition, the multitudinous things that would avail him nothing were all his.

Hers was the power.

As he looked across the lawn at the crowded party the guests became blurred and grotesque. Somewhere, lost in that blur, lurked his evil maker, teacup in hand, holding forth over two or three guests, outlining the next stage of his development.

How he hated her! How he loathed her! But how helpless he was to fight her.

Whatever morale he had been able to gather just before the birthday was quickly shattered afterward. There were three servants in the house. Beyond that he was alone with her in the expanse of twenty-seven rooms. She rarely put in a physical appearance anymore, preferring the isolation of her room. But he did not have to see her to know that she remained the source of his living nightmare. He was unable to make a move without her knowing about it. Her advice and comments

would then be transmitted to him via the servants.

His enormous material wealth was useless to him in his inner struggle. The money only elevated him to the titular leadership of a ritualistic, tradition-bound society. He wanted neither the leadership nor the society itself. But it was his obligation, his ridiculous eternal obligation to rule the aristocratic roost.

He strove to meet the countless petty demands of his new life, knowing he could never succeed because he could never believe as they did. They were shallow, stagnant creatures. Their flat world began and ended in Hamilton Square and one ventured beyond its limits at the risk of falling into empty space.

But he was born into Hamilton Square and it was as much his world as theirs. In the gloom of this knowledge he sank to the depths of despair. Out of despair grew instability. His nerves were on edge every waking hour. He began to have difficulty sleeping. And when he did sleep he dreamed.

He dreamed about the closet.

Not until after the rumor started did he first see the image.

The rumor didn't disturb him. It was typical of the pettiness of Hamilton Square.

In the course of his mental decline his temper had divorced itself from all reason. Every social gathering he attended was sure to witness, at any given time, a display of his temper. Luckily Vera was always with him to prevent physical violence. He was going "eccentric" at a very early age. This was the quaint nature of the rumor and he hated them for having nothing better to do.

The image was a more serious matter. It appeared on a cold February day while he was strolling along the banks of the Weldon River. He was alone and trying to find some manner of relaxation from the bitter turmoil that churned inside him. He had not informed anyone of where he was going.

The brisk New England wind slapped refreshingly at his face. The calm of the river, visible only between the itinerant cakes of ice, was soothing to his tired nerves. Somehow he was immediately aware that here, alone in the pure, open air, he could think clearly again.

A man's loneliness, he reflected, was so dependent upon where he lived it. Beside a river lined with trees, guarded by age old rocks, he could feel the warmth of security, for a small portion of the world was

there for him to see. In the concealment of a closet he could rot away, for there there was a portion of nothing.

He continued his stroll until he came within sight of the old Grover wharf. There was a group of men hauling supplies into an old warehouse. He started to walk toward them. His attention was arrested by a towering elm tree. Its height was awe-inspiring. Glistening icicles bejeweled its regal cape of snow.

One of the icicles near the base of the tree caught his eye and held it. More formidable in appearance than the others it was, nevertheless, dripping lazy pellets of water that formed a tiny crater in the soft snow. It was both intriguing and sad how, at precise intervals, another drop of its life slipped away forever. He could not remove his eyes. It staggered him to know that he had so much in common with a frozen, dagger-shaped piece of water. Each day something of his own life was slipping away and he had always been as helpless as the icicle to prevent it. He watched it dripping . . . dripping . . . dripping . . .

"Hey, fella, watch yer step there!"

The voice was fuzzy, as

though it was coming through a mouthless mask.

"Hey, what's the matter with you anyway? You in a trance or something? That water's mighty chilly. You fall in there and don't know how to swim yer a dead duck in ten seconds."

Something touched his arm. His eyes opened. Everything seemed warped. He made out the figure of a man . . . an old bearded man wearing a fisherman's slicker . . . standing beside him . . . a bewildered expression on his weather-torn face.

"You all right, fella?"

His clouded eyes found the wharf beneath his feet. He was standing on the edge . . . another step and . . . His head turned in a dream-like motion . . . he was able to see the outline of the giant elm several hundred yards away. It was *there . . . and he was on the wharf . . . why? . . . how did he get to the wharf? . . . his head throbbed savagely . . . How much time had elapsed? . . . He refused to consult his watch . . . the sun was still shining . . . it was the same day . . . good . . . or had a whole day passed? . . . no . . . no . . . impossible . . .*

"Listen, fella, are you all right?" the old man repeated.

"I think you better get back from the edge."

Jeffrey looked away from him. Through the dullness of his senses came his thick, hesitant answer.

"I'm fine . . . I'll be . . . all right."

The man forced an unamused laugh. "See here now, you weren't thinking about going in for a little dip by any chance?"

"I won't . . . jump," he droned. "I'll be . . . all right . . . Please leave . . . me alone . . ."

The old man retreated to his chores at the warehouse, keeping one puzzled eye on the wharf's edge.

Jeffrey found support against a post. His hand rose in agonizing slow motion to soothe his aching skull. He fought to regain control of himself. His eyes refused to focus. He shook his head violently. A disobedient mind continued to churn dizzily. Sickness erupted in his stomach. He hugged the post. He leaned over the side of the wharf. It had to be a dream. An incredibly realistic dream. It *had* to be! It was time to wake up. Wake up! Wake up!

The sickness retreated. Clarity crowded the throbbing out of his skull. The dullness subsided. Focus returned

to his eyes. The wharf . . . the post . . . real . . . solid. Not a dream at all! He rested his cheek against the post and gazed into the water.

The image gazed back at him!

The image smiled, revealing a cavernous mouth rimmed with gleaming teeth of gold.

The image stared at him through narrow, malevolent eyes.

The image emitted a hollow, gargling laugh, causing its silken facial hairs to bristle.

The image spoke, its gargantuan voice shooting up from the bowels of the icy river. "*Me! Me! Me!*" it roared.

Then, as mysteriously as it had appeared, it was gone!

His eyes were in perfect focus now. He jerked his head in the direction of the warehouse. The old man was still regarding him with concern.

The air was pure again. Everything was back in kilter. He turned and began the long lonesome walk home.

By the time he reached the iron gate outside his home he was in a state of semi-shock. He stumbled into the house, went to his bedroom and locked himself in.

He spent the rest of the day attempting to wipe the ugliness out of his mind. The incident and the image remained. He wanted desperately to pick up the phone and call Vera and tell her about it. Dear adorable Vera, always compassionate and understanding. He had come to love her, within the context of whatever meaning love had for him, in spite of the fact that she was Aunt Sarah's choice.

No, it would be wrong, he decided. It was too bizarre, too unbelievable. He could offer no logical explanation for it. To confide in *anyone* would surely give substance to the idiotic rumor of his "early eccentric behavior."

Night fell on his room and there was no sleep. Through the waning hours he tossed and turned, dredging the recesses of his mind for an explanation, struggling valiantly to keep a firm grip on his sanity. The rumor could not be true. He would not allow it to be true! His sanity was intact! He knew it!

Maybe he was the only one who knew it!

No! It was impossible! Impossible because alone by the river just twelve, thirteen hours ago he had been the sanest man on Earth! Alone

with nature, absorbing the wonder of God's work, he had felt the warmth of inner peace. It was the finest moment of his life. Yet it was taken away! Why? Why!!

He sprang up in his bed. His mind was a labyrinth of frenzied thoughts that crashed into each other and exploded over and over. He put his hands to his eyes and his head between folded knees. And once again he felt and looked like the little boy in the closet.

"Why?" he asked himself softly. And he began to weep.

Why was that moment of happiness torn from him? What was it that made him see the revolting image in the water? If he had never seen the image it would not now be branded indelibly in his mind and he would still know . . .

Aunt Sarah!!

Yes! Yes, that putrescent face of evil was her doing! It was a part of her. The part no mortal soul had ever seen. He had looked into the water that day and seen the reflection of her diseased mind.

His mind rushed forward excitedly supplying answers. What he had really seen, of course, was nothing more than an hallucination. But he was glad he saw it now that he knew what it was. More

than anything he had experienced this served to impress upon him how efficiently and savagely she had cornered his sanity.

He could not go on alone any longer. He had to find someone who could help him get to the root of her influence. If it meant discussing the image he would discuss it. He could afford to conceal nothing. The next few weeks or months might be the difference between salvation and utter collapse.

Tomorrow afternoon he would visit Ned Anderson. He would see him for psychiatric treatments seven days a week if necessary but he would be cured! If, on this cold and forbidding night, there was a particle of his sanity remaining he would use it to recapture all the rest.

Sleep came and Jeffrey Barton had a beautiful dream.

It was his first. And his last.

The harsh insistent knocking hammered at his skull. He opened his eyes. Someone was knocking at his bedroom door. He heaved himself out of bed and unlocked the door.

Poppy, a wisp of a chambermaid, stood frozen in the doorway. Her normally serene blue eyes bulged as

though she had just witnessed a murder.

"What is it, Poppy?"

"Begging your pardon, Master Jeffrey, but it's your Aunt Sarah . . ." Her mouth remained open and nothing came out.

"What about my Aunt?"

"She's . . . she's gone, sir."

"Gone? Poppy, what are you talking about? Gone where?"

"Oh, we don't know where, sir! That's just the trouble."

"Trouble . . ." Still half asleep, Jeffrey became annoyed. "Poppy, you're not making any sense!"

The maid was trembling. "She didn't ring for breakfast. She always rings for breakfast, but she didn't ring this morning." She was getting the words out faster than she could say them.

"What makes you think she's gone?"

"Well because, sir, it's close to three in the afternoon and she didn't ring for lunch either."

"Three in the afternoon!" He had not planned to sleep so late. There was the visit to Ned Anderson. He must get that done.

"Yes, sir, and when she didn't ring by two o'clock we . . . that is the cook and me

. . . we went to her room. We knocked but there wasn't any answer so we took the liberty of going in, sir. And she was gone."

He stood for a moment in ponderous, amazed silence. He decided to postpone the visit to the doctor. He hurried into his clothes and ran to Sarah's room.

Poppy was right. The room was empty. The bed had not been slept in. There was no sign of a note and, to the extent his amateur deductive powers would take him, no indication of foul play. He questioned all the servants. None of them had seen her leave the house that morning.

He was baffled. She couldn't have just vanished. He was sure she would never go away without notifying him . . . or at least the servants. Where was she?

Terror gripped him. Was this some new psychological tactic she had devised? It was a possibility. Maybe she realized that being controlled while she was in the house had only accomplished ninety percent of the damage to him. So she decided to move to a remote vantage point. Now she could control him but he would *never* be able to see her. The prospect was more than he could bear.

He conducted a frantic search of the house. She was nowhere to be found. He had no choice but to call the police.

By the following morning the police had searched all of Salem and the surrounding area. They did not find her. The afternoon papers gave the story front page headlines. Day and night for a week Jeffrey was harassed by reporters and police. They would exhaust one area of questioning and immediately start another and then another.

The theory most prevalent in Hamilton Square was kidnapping. Jeffrey found that amusing. There were many things that many people might like to do to Aunt Sarah but whisking her away was not one of them. If it was he feared for the kidnaper.

By week's end the police abandoned the investigation. The newspapers were relegating the story to the middle pages and Hamilton Square was busy preparing for Tessie Borden's coming out party.

Jeffrey had never believed it was possible that Aunt Sarah would ever leave the Barton mansion, let alone the city of Salem. It took him

fully eight days to really believe she *was* gone. When finally convinced he expected a great wave of relief to sweep over him.

He was alone in the immense living room. He sat smugly in the huge colonial wing chair before the fireplace. He looked up at the mirror over the fireplace. The room was warm and dark except for the low fire in front of him. His life was going to mean something now that she was gone at last.

Was she gone? He quickly pushed the question outside of his mind. Was she really gone? Again he dismissed the question. But it fought its way back in another form. How did he know she was really gone? The question burned inside him. He *didn't* know. And all the ways of finding out had been exhausted. He *couldn't* know. She *had* disappeared, yes. That was a fact. But the cause of her disappearance and the end result were only frustrating question marks. Why and how danced out of his reach, tormenting him further. Was she dead? If not, where did she go? Would she come back? That was another mystery.

He sat huddled in the wing chair staring at the waning fire before him. The flame

danced capriciously up and down . . . backward and forward . . . brave dying flame . . . in and out . . . up and down . . . drowsy . . . constant flame . . .

Then blackness. Inundating blackness, devoid of Time and Space.

He was standing against the mantel, his hand clutching his forehead. His drooping eyes fell on the mirror. There was no reflection of himself or of any other part of the room. The tall Grandfather clock on the opposite side of the room, normally the first thing anyone saw when looking in the mirror, was not reflected.

In the misty depths of the mirror he saw a shapeless, spongy embryo moving toward him, taking form as it approached . . . closer . . . ever closer . . .

The image!

It's gargantuan voice repeated the words it had spoken from the river. "*Me! Me! Me!*" it roared.

With herculean effort Jeffery tore himself from the mantel and fell with his face to the floor. He dared not look back. He lay there with his eyes squeezed shut and his heart beating viciously. He was unconcerned about how he had gotten from the chair to the mantel. His only

thought was that he had been right about her plan of action. It *was* a new line of psychological attack, more diabolical than any she had ever devised.

He waited for what seemed a week. Then he slowly opened his eyes and peeked at the mirror. The mist was gone. He got to his feet. He saw the reflection of the old grandfather clock. He was all right again. He turned the lights on and sat in the wing chair.

From that moment on he was consumed by one burning thought. She was still alive and she would come back! It was the only thought that made any sense. There wasn't a shred of evidence to show that she was dead . . . or even that she *might* be dead.

She would come back and he must be ready for her. Deep within him he had the conviction that this was his last opportunity to set himself free of her.

He phoned Ned Anderson. The doctor gave him an appointment. He would begin psychiatric treatment the next day.

"The keyhole," he said. "That was the worst torture of all. If only I could have determined just when she would take the adhesive tape from

the keyhole to let in the first blinding ray of light it might not have been so bad. But I never could and I'd go crazy."

Jeffrey bolted upright on the leather sofa.

"What I mean is I'd . . ."

"It's all right, Jeff." Doctor Anderson's voice was reassuring. "I *know* what you mean."

Jeffrey reclined and continued talking.

"Waiting and not knowing when. I read somewhere that's the way they flog criminals in England. A man is sentenced to a year and twenty lashes to be applied one at a time. But he is never told in advance when any of them are to be applied. So he has to sit there and play the cruelest guessing game of all, praying it could happen now, this minute. And then it comes and afterward he isn't any happier than before because he knows it will come again . . . and he doesn't know when. The cycle goes on and on." He was silent for a moment. "I guess Sarah must have read the same book," his tone was bitter.

"Uh-huh," the doctor mumbled. "Go on."

"There was never much after that. Once the light came through the keyhole I

only had one thing to look forward to. A few more days with her and then back in the closet again."

"Mmm." The doctor went to his desk, sat down and began to pore over the voluminous notes he had taken.

Jeffrey watched him intently. A tender-hearted old man . . . reminiscent of my father . . . knows what he's doing too . . . but the treatments have lasted for six weeks now . . . twice a week . . . why doesn't he ever do anything but pore over those damned notes? . . . what is he thinking? . . . if there's been any improvement why doesn't he tell me about it? . . . There hasn't been any, that's why! . . . Sarah has been to see him and convinced him the rumor is true! . . . No, no, no! . . . Mustn't believe that . . . mustn't get worked up . . . he's doing his best to help . . . he's one of the top men in his field . . . I just haven't told him everything yet . . . he doesn't know about the image . . . I should have told him about it long before this . . . I really should have . . . why haven't I! . . . look at him . . . he sits and goes over those notes and burns his good mind away trying to find the answer . . . and the answer hasn't reached those pages yet . . . or has

it? . . . what was it he said yesterday? . . . something about existing in the inner world . . . what did that mean? . . . maybe I'd better tell him . . . yes . . . yes, I *will* tell him . . . only not today . . . not today. . . .

Doctor Anderson yawned and slapped his notebook shut.

"I don't blame you if you're bored," said Jeffrey. "How many times have I gone through that closet for you?"

The old man lifted his glasses to his forehead where they perched like another pair of eyes over two protruding eyebrows flecked with gray. He rubbed his eyes.

"Makes no difference, Jeff," came his patient reply. "It *happened* more than once. I expect to *listen* to it more times than it happened."

Jeffrey started to get up.

Anderson waved him back down.

"Do you mind, Jeff? We're not through yet . . ."

I must tell him!

"I want you to see if you can go all the way back to that first experience once again . . ."

Tell him! Tell him!

". . . and tell me what it was you did that prompted her to conceive of the closet as a penal device."

Not today! Next time! Next time!

"Are you listening to me, Jeff?"

"Huh? Oh, yes . . . look, Ned, we've been over this so many times. I don't see the point . . ."

"Jeff," he interrupted soberly, "we can't afford to stop going over it. I realize you could find more pleasant things to do in an afternoon, but you must face a few facts . . ."

"I know, I'm not a child anymore, I'm close to thirty and somewhere in the heap-ing mass of eighteen years there is a haystack and in it there's a needle. All we have to do is find it and I'll be in tip-top shape." He got up and paced the room, scowling, restless, trying to shake his irritation.

"That's right, Jeff. I never for a moment wanted you to think this would be easy. We have to keep moving forward, keep pinpointing. And we have to be patient. The only thing we know to be uncontrovertibly true about the mind is the mystery of it. Our work is like the cycle you spoke of. Each great discovery is countered with a new phase of the mystery. It's never easy, Jeff. Never."

Jeffrey sat on the sofa and looked at the floor.

"I'm sorry, Ned."

The doctor picked up a small chair, placed it in front of him and sat.

"If you feel a resistance we can call it off for today. But bear in mind we'll start the next session where we left off today. Between now and then you should prepare yourself." He paused and then spoke with intense concern. "Jeff, there is no better indication of how much help you need than what happened last night."

Jeffrey's eyes flared with anger. "I told you that wasn't my fault!"

"All right, we both know it wasn't your fault," he remained calm. "But today Sam Lawrence is nursing a broken jaw."

"He's lucky it isn't a broken neck!"

"Why did you hit him, Jeff?"

"He doesn't know how to behave with women."

"Isn't that his business?"

"Not when he's in my home and the woman happens to be my fiancée!"

"Do you think Vera approved of your hitting him?"

Jeffrey wanted to bellow the answer at him. His reply was almost inaudible.

"No."

"What about the other guests? Do you think they understood why you did it?"

"They *couldn't* understand!" he said fiercely.

"Why couldn't they? If Sam had been that obvious in making a pass at Vera it seems to me they should have sympathized with you."

"They don't know what sympathy is on Mother's Day!"

"Is it possible that Sam didn't actually make a pass?"

"No!"

"Perhaps it was just the way he *looked* at Vera, the way he smiled. And you interpreted it to mean . . ."

"Now listen to me, Ned . . ."

"No, Jeff!" The doctor was firm but not harsh. "As an old family friend I think *I* had better do the talking."

Jeffrey's eyes were cold deadly holes, spitting hatred at the man across the room. In that instant a sudden loathing boiled in him. He wanted to leap from the sofa and . . .

An old family friend.

The gentle truth and sincerity of the words caused him to avoid the doctor's straightforward, penetrating look. He lit a cigarette.

"All right, Ned. I'm listening."

"Did Sam Lawrence make anything resembling a physical pass at Vera?"

"No," he whispered. It hurt him to say it. It hurt bad!

"What made you hit him?"

There was an unendurable silence as Jeffrey searched for a way to explain.

"The party began at eight. It lasted until two or three this morning. Sam hounded her all that time. He kept taking her off into a corner alone . . ."

"Do you think you were jealous?"

"It wasn't jealousy. Vera belongs to me. I don't have to worry about her. I kept watching him, the way he operated, the shallow insipid laugh, the pseudo-intellectual speech maker, the professional gentleman, the courageous musketeer. He's a mass of bubbles, Sam is, and every time a lady says no one of the bubbles breaks and Sam is that much closer to floating away from this Earth."

Doctor Anderson smiled. "You've analyzed Sam Lawrence rather well. Now what made you hit him?"

"That's the part that's hard to explain. I know I kept watching him . . . I wasn't drinking . . . and suddenly, I

don't know just when or how, he changed. He was no longer just a man with an evening of sex in mind . . . something happened to his face . . . his mouth curved into the most lecherous smile I've ever seen . . . his eyes were brimming over with lust . . . I knew in a flash that he was the personification of evil and I turned away from the mantelpiece and . . ."

"And your imagination caused you to break his jaw."

Jeffrey rubbed the side of his face.

"I have a dentist appointment later today. He did some damage himself."

"Jeff, I want you to stop seeing all your friends."

The suddenness of the request jarred him, as the doctor had intended it to.

"You want me to do what!"

"Cut yourself off completely from all your friends."

"Why?"

"Why not? You neither like nor respect any of them, do you?"

"No," he replied and then added, "except for Vera."

"Jeffrey, we've covered a lot of ground and we've barely scratched the surface. Your relationship with Aunt Sarah, the way she raised you, your conscious reasons for hating her, and many

other elements can be brought to account for your inability to conform to your own society. We know you have a rather mild temper until you are in a gathering of friends. Then it becomes an incredibly violent temper. But Hamilton Square is not your sole resentment. We know you resent being the only Barton left and what responsibility that entails. The family name, the tradition and so forth. And so you've given every indication that you intend to be the *last* Barton. You've been formally engaged to Vera for eight years and you've consistently avoided marriage for two prime reasons. You love her but resent the fact that she was Aunt Sarah's choice . . . and you have an overwhelming and, at the moment, quite understandable fear of having children. All this we know and we're in a good position to fight it. But there is one thing we don't know . . ."

Don't tell him! He must not know!

"Somewhere," the doctor continued, "somehow, during those early years you managed to develop . . . well, at the moment I shall call it a kind of power. It enables you to see, or at least *think* you see, something in a person that is

apparent to nobody else and that unleashes a desire in you to commit physical violence. Naturally, after the strict manipulation by Sarah, you've reached the point where it is impossible to control this power . . ."

Must not tell him! Make an excuse . . . have to go to the dental appointment. He is getting too close!

" . . . to the point where the power practically possesses a mind of its own. That's why I think it would be best if you stopped seeing your friends. Your temperament has always been at its worst in their presence."

"Where do you think I should go?"

The doctor sat behind his desk and consulted his notebook. "In studying the reasons she had for locking you up I find they generally had to do with your having sneaked off to places she had placed off limits."

Jeffrey sighed. "Yes, there was only one place fit for a growing young aristocrat to breathe air in and that was Hamilton Square. Everyplace else was off limits."

"Everyplace?"

He stared at the floor. "Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? But it's true. I could have fed the pigeons on the Salem

Common and it would have been a crime."

"I find the place mentioned most often is Front Street. Any particular reason for that?"

"Many. Front Street is poverty row, crawling with inferior animal types, no place for a little boy with a halo of purity around his head. To associate with poor animal types was to *become* an animal type."

"Why did you keep going there?"

"She was so dead set against it. With all the frightening stories she told and the long dull lectures that followed I managed to construct an elaborate mental image of Front Street. I was sure it was a place of dark intrigue, a kind of crossroads of the world, flaming with excitement. One day I slipped out of the house and went there . . ."

"And your images were destroyed, of course."

"Not completely. True, it wasn't what I had visualized. There was nothing romantic or exciting about it. It was squalid and obscene and corrupt. I remember running like lightning away from it, the only time I was ever glad to get home. But I went back. Somehow it held a strange

fascination for me. And I had to keep going back because I wanted to know what that fascination was. But I never did find out what it was . . . until I was around twenty . . . and then it was too late."

"What was it?"

Jeffrey walked to the window and looked out over Hamilton Square.

"It was discovery," he said.

Ned Anderson frowned.

"Discovery?"

"Yes. Of certain realities, certain truths. My first shock came when I learned the kids on Front Street wouldn't play with me because I wasn't acceptable to them. *Me*, I thought, having to be accepted by *them*! I had difficulty controlling the urge to run home and laugh in Sarah's face. Eventually I *was* accepted and I played with them as often as I dared. The next shock came one day when we were playing near the fishing boats. One of the kids, a scrawny little devil with hair sprouting in every direction over his head, told me his great-great-great somebody or other had come over on the *Mayflower*. When I refused to believe him the other kids rallied around him and zealously defended his story. He wasn't a very bright kid and

normally the others didn't even like him. But they were proud as hell of his ancestors. I couldn't fully digest it then but my discovery was one of people. Those kids had entered a world without wealth or material possession. They substituted for that by developing the ability to laugh and sing and play . . . and be proud of what they didn't have. I came into a world paved with red carpets, the material wealth just sitting there waiting for me to take it . . . and I had to sneak into the other world to find a substitute for my misery. So the discovery was also one of money. Stripped of it I realized Hamilton Square would have been another Front Street and not all of its high flown tradition could have prevented that. Given enormous wealth the opposite would hold true for Front Street. The kids on Front Street were no less victims of circumstance than I was."

The doctor sucked on a freshly lit pipe.

"When was the last time you went there?"

"About eight years ago. I drove through without stopping."

"Why don't you spend a day there? Talk with people. Maybe you'll see one of the

kids you knew. You can talk over old memories. Try it and see."

He was glad Ned had brought up the subject of Front Street. For a while it looked as though the doctor was on the brink of exposing the one secret he wanted curiously to cling to. Thank God he'd gotten away from it.

He put his hand on the old man's shoulder and smiled at him.

"Thanks, Ned. I'll try it. Maybe it'll restore something. I hope so anyway."

The living room seemed to float. Everything was out of proportion. He floundered toward the mantelpiece and gripped it for support. The awful spinning sickness was at his stomach again.

The dentist . . . he had been to see the dentist . . . but how did he get home? . . . he couldn't remember coming home . . . what kind of an injection had the fool given him anyway? . . . he couldn't remember . . . no, wait! . . . there was no injection . . . there was only the watch . . . dangling on the end of a chain . . . bright gold watch . . . back and forth . . . steady . . . a pendulum . . . fascinating . . .

Blackness.

The living room . . . mantelpiece . . . everything floating. What happened!! . . . a memory cell spilled open . . . hypnosis! The dentist said he would use hypnosis . . . no pain . . . he was right . . . it worked well . . . but terrible after affects . . .

What was wrong with the mirror? . . . where was the reflection of the old grandfather clock on the opposite wall of the room? . . . the mirror was a dense mist . . . reflecting nothing in the room . . .

He gazed into it and watched the image take shape before his eyes; horrible, unbelievable, but there.

Every responsible part of him was overcome with the desire to run, run out of the house, get to Ned Anderson, tell him she was back, ask him, beg him for help.

The gargled laugh rocketed from its echo chamber roots and shot through him, galvanizing every nerve ending in his body.

"Doctor Anderson can't help you, Jeffrey. He'll find out what you haven't told him. Then he will never be able to help you!"

Jeffrey answered in a soft frightened whisper.

"Please go away."

The image smiled. Its thun-

derous voice softened to a hoarse whisper.

"Forgive me, Jeffrey. One of the servants entering the room might not understand, is that it? Yes, yes, you're right. That mustn't happen!"

"Go away! Please go away!"

The image placed a gnarled, ring studded index finger to the lipless gash that was its mouth.

"Shh! The servants, Jeffrey! I can't go away. There are only two people who can help you. You are one and I am the other."

"No, no, that isn't true!" he screamed. "You're trying to destroy me! You want me to go insane! You've planned it for years!"

"You do me a great wrong, Jeffrey," came the throaty reply. *"Your rationalization has gone wrong if a mere consonant is the difference between what I am and what you think I am."*

"What do you mean?"

"You're trying to think of me as a fiend. I am really a friend. See what a difference a single insignificant letter makes? Look closer, Jeffrey. Look closer and you will see that I am your friend!"

He was unable to resist. He moved, his face closer to the

mirror. He was stricken with horror at the close-up of the image. Behind the ravenous eyes there was a long suffering sadness. Under the silken hair that grew from every pore, lay smooth sensitive skin. The bloodthirsty mouth concealed the gentle soft lips of a child. The hairless forehead was a maze of criss-crossing wrinkles. And in the deep crevice of a scar running just below the hairline he saw a smoldering brand. Its letters were barely perceptible. They spelled his name!

He moved now. He backed away from the mirror, knocking over an end table. But he could not take his eyes from the image.

The image beckoned him to return.

"Now you know, Jeffrey! It will be you and me together now! You see why you can't tell Doctor Anderson, don't you?"

He found himself being irresistably drawn back to the mirror.

"Yes . . . I see now . . ." he droned.

"A good thing, too, Jeffrey, because our two minds are so far superior to any single mind. We outsmarted Sarah's mind, didn't we? We proved we could get along without her!"

"Did we . . . really prove it . . ."

"Yes, yes, of course we did!" said the image. It spoke feverishly now as the mist in the mirror began to clear. *"We can do without anyone, Jeffrey. Remember that! Only we have the power now. Go to Front Street, Jeffrey. There is excitement there, a different kind of life. Go there and enjoy the new power! And live! Live . . . Live . . ."*

The mirror cleared and the image was gone.

The room was normal again. His head no longer ached. Yet he still needed the mantel to support him. The revelation had unhinged him. Aunt Sarah had been at the root of all his inner turmoil but the image was not her. It was not any part of her.

The image was himself!

That was the fact. He could not dismiss the fact. *That* was why he couldn't tell Anderson! The old doctor had come close, maybe too close, when he said a power existed almost as a separate being. He knew the image was right. He could never tell Anderson now. He could never tell anyone!

The stink of dead fish was sheer hell on his sensitive nostrils. Front Street was hot and crowded and sticky. The

swarming itinerant shoppers elbowed and shoved him. His eardrums swelled with the discordant screeching of fish hawkers. Grimy-faced kids made fun of him and splashed mud on his spotless tailor-made seersucker. The street was filthy, littered with fish heads, old newspaper and wet sawdust.

Front Street. Jugular vein of the waterfront. Source of life to a community in which there was already too much life.

He had been strolling for over an hour, reliving the fascination he had experienced as a child. Their turbulent existence was so completely alien to his own. What amounted, for him, to the ugly realities of life, were only commonplace occurrences to these people. They lived and they *were* the ugly realities. Unsheltered, he thought. Just as unsheltered as the poor dead mackerals laying row upon row in the bleating sun.

He continued his stroll. He didn't buy anything. He didn't stop to talk to anyone. He didn't know quite how to go about it. Such were the inhibitions that came with maturity. How simple it had been as a child, just a matter of marching up to other children and saying you wanted to

play with them. Nothing to it. There was something ridiculous about the prospect of interrupting a man selling fish and saying you just wanted to talk to him. There was the distinct feeling the fish hawker wouldn't be interested.

He walked further, leaving the fish markets and shoppers behind him. The street narrowed into a series of cheap flop houses, tenements and taverns. This section was more familiar. It was calmer than he remembered it. There was a group of kids sitting serenely on the edge of the wharf, trying their luck with makeshift fishing poles.

He peered through the window of a tavern. It was empty except for a bartender who was wiping glasses and looked bored to death. Jeffrey thought about going in. It seemed a good way to start a conversation, even though the bartender would necessarily be a captive audience.

He went inside. He stumbled over a beer keg that was sitting with several others just off the center of the room. The bartender looked up long enough to size him up and groan exasperation. The place was cool but had a damp musty odor. There were sev-

eral booths and tables with chairs turned upside down on them. The ceiling was low, lined with broad oak beams. At one end of the bar there was a narrow flight of stairs. Behind the bottles a mirror ran the length of the bar. The names of drinks and their prices were scribbled on it in soap.

Jeffrey sat on a wooden stool at the bar. The bartender went on wiping glasses, apparently not interested in late morning trade.

Jeffrey waited a moment. He cleared his throat.

The bartender grunted, stuffed his towel into a glass and came toward him. He was red-faced and pushing sixty. Jeffrey was sure he had one of the beer kegs under his apron.

"What's your hurry?" drawled the bartender. "You are starting early, you got all day." He placed a pasteboard coaster in front of him. "What'll it be?"

"Old Fashioned," said Jeffrey.

"Old Fashioned," the bartender repeated. His lips barely parted for the words to escape.

He took his time with the drink, giving Jeffrey the once over as he mixed. When

he spoke again there was a glint in his eye and his words contained a good-natured saltiness.

"You must be a fisherman," he muttered. "Always glad to know when the fleet's in."

Jeffrey couldn't stop his reflexes in time. He looked down at his imported seersucker in complete bewilderment. Then, just as quickly, he looked back at the bartender, embarrassed. The bartender was shaking his drink. There was a mischievous grin on his face.

Jeffrey was at sixes and sevens for a moment. Then he smiled. Being such fair game for the bartender's sense of humor amused him.

The bartender poured the drink and set it on the bar in front of him.

"You lost, mister?"

"Lost?" he said flatly. "I'm afraid I don't . . ." He caught the bartender inspecting his suit again. "Oh, I see what you mean. No, I was just strolling in the area and . . . well, I thought I might like to talk to someone."

"Who?"

Jeffrey shrugged. "I don't know . . . anyone."

"What about?"

"Well, nothing really. I just wanted to get acquainted with someone . . ." The bartender's

stare made him uncomfortable. ". . . And talk."

"About nothing?"

He answered with a weak hollow laugh. "No, not about *nothing* . . ."

"Then what about?"

He shifted uneasily on the wooden stool. He couldn't understand why the old guy was so curious.

"Well, about anything . . . I just want to . . ."

"You a cop?"

"No, of course not." He was dumbfounded. "Why?"

"What business you got here on Front Street?"

"I assure you I'm only visiting. I have no business and I don't want to make trouble for anyone."

The bartender gave him a long steady look.

"You made a mistake, mister, coming to this neck of the woods in those fancy duds."

He was right, Jeffrey thought. Dressed as he was he would have difficulty starting any kind of a conversation on Front Street.

"You want me to leave?" he asked.

The bartender laughed. "I said you wore the wrong clothes, mister. I didn't say your money was no good. Stay as long as you like. Only be careful on your way home."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean certain people who don't have money form bad habits. They wait in alleys for certain people who *do* have money. You know what I mean?"

"But it's broad daylight!"

"High noon, four in the morning, it makes no difference. Out on that street the muggers and winos will take one look at you and see a walking vault."

"Thanks," he said. "When I come back I'll know enough to use my head and dress differently."

The bartender's mouth dropped open. "You mean you might come back to this hell hole?"

Jeffrey smiled. "This isn't my first visit."

The bartender whistled in surprise and walked away muttering something about the idle rich.

Jeffrey had two more drinks. When he looked at his watch it was one-thirty. There was plenty of time, he decided, to go home and change clothes. Then he could come back and mingle and never be noticed.

"How much?" he shouted to the bartender, who had gone to the other end of the bar.

"One-eighty," came the reply. He rang up the amount

on the cash register on his way to pick up the money.

Jeffrey fumbled through his pockets. His face turned crimson. He smiled weakly. The bartender stood with his hands on his hips and a don't-tell-me-you-lost-your-wallet look on his face.

Jeffrey completed another clumsy search through his pockets.

"I'm afraid something is wrong," he said.

"I'm afraid I know what it is," the bartender muttered.

"I always keep my wallet in my upper right hand coat pocket. I don't understand."

"I do. Somebody saw you coming, mister."

"Saw me coming?"

"A pickpocket."

"A pickpocket! At this time of day?"

"They keep very irregular hours."

A melancholy frown twisted his features. The bartender was so complacent about it. Pickpockets and thugs were accepted facts of life to him. But it wasn't only the bartender. Now that he thought about it the whole street seemed different to him. He wondered if one of the kids he had once played with might have so resigned himself to the ravages of poverty as to

resort to a life of thievery . . . picking pockets in order to exist.

"I assure you . . ." he began and was interrupted by a bland wave of the bartender's hand.

"I know, I know . . . you'll send me the money. But it just happens I already rung it up on the register. I don't want to be stuck for it in case you should step out the door into a mild case of amnesia."

"Well, I . . ."

"It's all right, Fred. He won't forget to pay you."

Jeffrey spun around to see who belonged to the third voice.

The girl was young and attractive. A winsome smile played on her friendly mouth. Her hands rested gracefully in the pockets of a light trench coat.

"That's very kind of you, Miss, but you don't have to . . ."

"We've known each other before, Mr. Barton. Won't you let an old friend give you a reference?"

He was confused and speechless. If they *were* old friends he was not aware of it. But he liked her looks whether they were old friends or not. Her skin was porcelain smooth, drawn tight under high exotic cheek bones.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I'm afraid I don't . . ."

She let him dangle in mid-air for a moment.

"I'll try to refresh your memory. Shall we sit in a booth?"

"Yes . . . yes, by all means," he answered dumbly.

The bartender forgot about the tab and went back to the monotonous task of wiping glasses.

They sat facing each other in a cramped wooden booth. She was silent again, deliberately silent. He felt a discomforting warmth in his face. He knew he was blushing.

"You'd better not wait for me to guess," he said with a sheepish grin. "I'm not really very good at guessing."

Her eyes sparkled brilliantly. They were large brown ovals. He liked looking into her eyes.

She laughed.

"What's funny?"

"You're embarrassed," she said.

"No . . . no, I'm not. Really. I just . . . I just can't remember, that's all."

"You were twelve and I was ten and we played together not more than a block from where we're sitting." The playful smile returned to her lips. "And I see no reason to tell

you my name because you once told me you'd never forget it."

He avoided looking at her. "I *have* forgotten," he whispered. "I'm sorry."

Her smile faded. She reached across the booth and put her finger under his chin. She brought his face level with hers.

"Hey, pull yourself together, Mr. Barton. You haven't committed a crime." She waited until he looked into her eyes. "It's Julie. Julie Noyes. Remember now?"

He nodded.

"You used to tell me how you had run away from your house to be able to play with us. You remember that?"

"I can't forget it."

There was an uncomfortable silence. Her eyes met his. His stare forced her to grin awkwardly. She slipped the kerchief from her head and shook her hair until it fell evenly around her shoulders.

"I've read about you in the newspapers every now and then," she said.

He didn't answer, preferring to be enchanted by the magnetism of her face. Years had gone by and she seemed so vibrant and alive.

She grew uneasy. "You're engaged to that Stevens girl, aren't you?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I am."

He liked the way her nose wrinkled when she smiled. And how her hair fell in a soft curl over one eyebrow.

"I guess you just don't have much to say to me, is that it, Mr. Barton?"

She started to leave the booth. Something of the radiance was gone. He had offended her. He was furious with himself for not being able to show his enthusiasm for the reunion. He stopped her.

"Please," he touched her arm. "Please sit down. It's just that . . . it's been so long . . . I guess I don't know how to talk to anyone anymore."

She sat facing him again, studying his face. She seemed to understand his plight and to sympathize with it.

"I remember you that way. We were always doing things that confused you. And you were always apologizing . . ."

He grinned. "I remember . . . You all ran out of patience because I never stopped asking questions. You wondered whether people in my neighborhood sent their kids to school."

She laughed infectiously. "Now you're back on the memory beam."

He felt better now that the conversation had gotten off the ground. He wanted to

spend more time with her. She laughed the way he remembered the others laughing.

"Tell me about yourself, Julie. What have you been doing these long seventeen years?"

"You really want to know?"

"Of course, I'm very interested."

"Living," she said and this time he laughed. "What's so funny about living? Sometimes it isn't easy. Only I don't like to think about those times. I just take it as it comes, moment to moment, day to day . . ."

"Are you married?"

"Am I what?"

"Married."

She rested her head against the back of the booth. The corners of her mouth dipped downward. All at once she looked tired.

"Are you kidding me, Mr. Barton?"

"Why would I want to kid you?" he asked innocently.

She slowly unbuttoned her trench coat, then let it fall open to reveal a string of false pearls and a cheap cotton dress with a plunging neckline. Her firm breasts huddled close together at the neckline.

"Do I look like a girl who could afford to get married?"

"I think you do."

"Let's face it," she said bitterly, "I'd lose a fortune."

"Julie, I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, come, come, Mr. Barton. Where've you been all these years? Where were you when they handed out the facts of life?"

Her sudden harshness rattled him. "I'm sorry if I don't understand . . . have I . . . have I offended you?"

"Oh, brother, you *are* kidding me." She buttoned her coat. "Thanks for the afternoon of pleasant memories. If you'll excuse me I'd better leave before I get embarrassed. And if I get embarrassed somebody might laugh!"

She got up from the booth and strode toward the door.

He ran after her and took her by the shoulders.

"Please, Julie," he groped for the right words, "I don't know what I've said but I didn't mean to make you angry. Honestly. You've made me very happy . . . just talking to me. I want to see you again. Please believe that."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Barton," she said in a half-whisper, "I get a little touchy every now and then. Sure you can see me again. Anytime."

"Thank you, Julie."

"Don't mention it. Just climb the stairs to the left of

the bar. You'll find me at the far end of the hall on the right."

"You live *here*?"

"You still want to see me?"

"Yes," he replied quickly.

Her large brown eyes closed for a moment as if to wall off tears. She drew his head down and pressed her lips against his.

"When you come by be sure and check with Fred, the bartender," she said. "So long, Mr. Barton."

He stood there, his gaze transfixed where she had disappeared through the door.

He left the tavern. Outside the sun had swung over to the west. Soon it would be evening. A wild sensation swept through him. He had to see her again soon! There was no waiting for tomorrow. It *had* to be sooner. That night!

He walked along the street remembering their conversation and how ineffectual he had been. The desire in him fizzled as he realized she could never appreciate Jeffrey Barton. He needed confidence, a more forthright approach, the ability to laugh as she did and hold up his end of the conversation. He had none of those qualities.

Then he remembered. In his mind the phrase kept repeat-

ing itself. *Two minds are far superior to a single mind.*

He had to get home as fast as possible. At home there was someone who could help him.

The image was still far off in the swirling background of the mirror. But it was already fully formed. As it converged on him he saw all of it for the first time. As if to erase any doubts he may have held it conformed in every way to his physical self.

There was no longer any desire to resist. And if there had been the desire he knew it would have been pointless. The image was irrevocably his and he accepted it. It was the one source of truth he had ever known. He could always depend on it. It was his friend and his benefactor. He needed it and it needed him. Together they represented a whole. Separated, each was helpless.

He stood mesmerized as its hideous frame loomed larger. When it reached the mantel's edge it stepped to one side. Its hair-infested arm gestured toward the hazy background.

"Look, Jeffrey!"

Jeffrey obeyed. His wilting eyes drifted toward the mist.

"Look closely, Jeffrey!"

The mist began to clear.

"There she is!" cried the image. *"See her, Jeffrey?"*

The mist was gone. The Front Street Tavern materialized before his eyes.

"Come in, Jeffrey! Come in!"

A weightlessness came over him. In the next second he merged with the mirror and the tavern became a reality.

"Over there, Jeffrey! On the stairs. She is a lovely creature, isn't she? She was made to deliver pleasure. For you. For you, Jeffrey. You saddened her this afternoon. She wanted you to love her. But you'll rectify that, won't you?"

The image was still with him but no longer visible.

The tavern was crowded with raucous drinkers. Body heat and tobacco smoke combined to smother the atmosphere. He glanced into the annex. The booths and tables were littered with bottles and glasses, overflowing ashtrays and sopping wet coasters. There was a couple at every table. Most of them were making obscene advances at each other. They were all laughing and having a gay time.

"There's no time to waste, Jeffrey. She's not on the stairs now. She's gone to her room. Waiting for you!"

His eyes wandered from the tables and booths, over the bar. Fred, the bartender, and a crowd of seedy looking men

were laughing uproariously at someone's joke.

"Up the stairs by the bar!"

His eyes reached the stairs.

"She's waiting for you Jeffrey! To see you again. She is your pleasure. Go up the stairs!"

His eyes surveyed the crowded bar. Nobody was watching the stairs. They weren't even aware of his presence. He darted up the stairs and found himself at one end of a long corridor. The rooms were set close together.

"All the way to the end! On the right! There is your pleasure, Jeffrey! Anytime, she told you. Remember? Hurry, Jeffrey, hurry!"

He stole down the corridor, his pace quickening with every step, the ecstasy piling up inside him. He stopped in front of the last room. He was out of breath. He waited. He would have to catch his second wind before he could make the proper entrance. He could not disappoint her.

He was ready. There was no reason to knock. He knew she was waiting for him, waiting to enchant him. He opened the door. He saw the man and froze.

The man was sitting beside her on the bed. The man was unshaven and obscene in his undershirt. The man was

old enough to be her father and was contaminating her mouth with seething kisses.

The shock was compounded when he realized she was not resisting the man. She had betrayed him! His head swelled with blind rage. The room swayed before him. He slammed the door.

They broke apart. She screamed when she saw him. She ran to the corner of the room. The man sprang from the bed and lunged at him.

His claw-like fingers found the man's fleshy bare arm with deadly accuracy. With scalpel precision he opened a gash, releasing a torrent of blood. The man shrieked with pain and scrambled for the door. He clutched the man's neck with iron-strong hands and squeezed until the blood had been compressed into the head. He heard a snap. The body fell in a lump, horrible heap on the floor.

He turned to find her. She cringed in the corner, her thin frail hands knotted together in front of her mouth, her painted face racked with fear. She held no enchantment for him now. The memories had been shattered. She wasn't the same little girl of long ago. She couldn't please him anymore. She was a sorceress,

meant to tease and laugh at him.

Her scream lasted only a split second. His hands took her naked white throat. The thick silken hair bristled as his thumb pressed at the jugular vein, choking off another attempted scream. Her eyes bloated out of proportion. The last gasp of life abandoned her limp body. He let her fall to the floor.

He heard voices in the corridor. Voices getting closer. The door! He fled to the door and bolted it. More voices . . . louder . . . a knock! He saw the window. The voices were shouting angrily . . . pushing at the door. He looked out at the alley below . . . a two story drop . . . he crept to the window ledge . . . he jumped . . .

Pain ripped through his twisted ankle. His mind was spinning. He heard a crash. Upstairs in the room! They had broken the door down. He crawled into the protective shadow of the building .

"Run, Jeffrey! Run! Run! Run!"

He ran, in tortuous pain, toward the dimly lit street and disappeared into the fog.

The fog evaporated and he saw the grandfather clock on the other side of the dark living room. He turned to the

mirror. In the disappearing mist he caught a final glimpse of the grimacing image, its eyes dilating with lurid satisfaction.

"Well done, Jeffrey. Well done!"

His ankle throbbed unmercifully. He limped toward the sofa. He stopped. The sound was faint. Someone breathing. He was not alone in the room!

He turned and saw her standing by the window, her lovely body framed there in the moonlight.

"Jeffrey, where on earth have you been?" Annoyance filtered through her carefully modulated tone. "It's almost midnight, darling."

"What are you doing here, Vera?"

"What am I doing here? I haven't seen you for three days. I'm engaged to you, remember?"

She moved toward him.

"Stay where you are, Vera!"

The deadliness of his command was foreign to her. She stopped.

"Darling, what's wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong. I'm perfectly fine!"

He was caught between the sofa and the mantelpiece with nothing to lean on. He winced as another charge of pain

went through his ankle. He had no choice. He hobbled to the mantel.

"You're hurt!" Vera exclaimed, coming swiftly closer to him.

"I told you I'm all right. Go home, Vera!"

"Jeffrey, you're behaving so strangely. You haven't been drinking, have you?"

He turned away from her. "Go home, Vera. Please go home! I'll call you in the morning."

"No," she answered, sounding a note of concern. "I won't go home. I've been waiting here for three hours. Tomorrow is your birthday and I wanted to surprise you with a present. Now you tell me to go home. What's happened, Jeffrey?"

"Why do you keep asking me what's happened?" he bellowed.

"Darling, you can be a little more civil than that. And a little less mysterious. I only want to know how you hurt your leg."

"I tripped. Coming through the front gate," he snapped.

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"I'm very tired, Vera. Please let me call you in the morning."

"Nonsense. We're going to have a look at that ankle."

Her hand reached out for the lamp switch.

"Don't turn the lamp on!" he shouted. "Leave it alone!"

He heard the click. The area by the mantelpiece was bathed in light. He hobbled to the sofa.

"Now don't be silly, darling. How can I administer first aid if there isn't any li——"

The words died on her lips. A shudder raced through her. She saw the dark red stains on the mantelpiece. Her eyes were drawn to the sofa. His hands were soaked with blood. His eyes turned upward to meet hers. She gasped. His face was sullen, treacherous.

Her mouth quivered.

"Jeffrey . . ." was all she could whisper.

He stood up. "I told you not to turn on the light, Vera." He had to forget about the ankle. That could be attended to later. He had an emergency to deal with.

"Jeffrey," she repeated, forcing the words, "where did that blood come from . . ."

"I warned you to go home, Vera. I told you I would call you in the morning." He moved toward her. "Why didn't you have sense enough to leave?"

"What are you going to do?"

The answer was in his eyes.

She moved. She wasn't fast enough. He jumped in front of her, putting her between him and the mantel. Panic seized her, blotting her coherence. Short uncertain steps brought her closer to the mantel as he closed in upon her.

"Jeffrey, stop it!" she screamed. "Stop looking at me that way! What's wrong with you?"

"Kill her, Jeffrey. Kill her now before she can talk to anyone."

He moved in closer.

"Jeffrey, stay away from me! Stay away!"

Her back touched the mantelpiece. The panic curdled her reflexes. She had retreated as far as possible. The blood stained hands darted forward and clamped her neck. She mustered up a full burst of energy to scream. His grip was animal-like. It choked off her vocal chords. She clawed at him, digging her nails into his distorted face. She scratched and kicked in a feverish effort to hold on to life. It was useless. The pungent sense of death was all around her. The room got darker. She felt the last dull breath of life slipping away.

She saw the vase on the mantelpiece above her head.

There would be only a second or two. Her hand reached up and gripped the rim of the vase. The strength was gone. She was able to tilt it but she knew she could never bring it down on him.

He glanced at the vase. He realized what she was trying to do. That was the end, she thought.

His eyes widened. He relaxed his grip. A burst of fresh air rushed into her crippled lungs.

"Leave it alone!" he demanded. "Take your hands off the vase."

Instinct told her to cling for dear life. He released her neck, leaving her choking for more air. The hostility disappeared from his features. He began to whimper like a child. He clutched at her fingers. He could not remove them from the rim.

"Let go!" he cried. "Please let go of the vase!"

She didn't know why he was terrified of it. She couldn't afford to care. She only knew clinging to it was her only way of staying alive.

He put both hands to the task of prying her loose. She tore at his hair with her free hand. He lost his grip and fell backwards, leaving her off balance. The vase started to topple. She couldn't stay on

her feet and keep it from falling.

She fell near the fireplace. Jeffrey made a final desperate lunge to save the vase. It was too late. It crashed to the floor, spilling its contents to the rug.

He stood in rapt silence, gaping at it. The electrifying scream that escaped Vera's throat failed to move him. He was mesmerized by the sight on the rug.

Vera stood up. Her hand went to her mouth as if to hold back the sickly feeling that sifted through her.

The vase lay in pieces on the ornate rug. Near one of the pieces she saw a mound of cold gray ashes. At the base of the mound was the charred skull, a hideous misshapen thing with stray patches of hair to show that decomposition was all but completed.

Her leaden feet edged her toward the door. She saw he was no longer interested in her. She opened the door and ran with alarming speed out of the house.

He stood watching the ugly remains of Aunt Sarah. From some distant crevice came the muffled voice of the image.

"The furnace. Back into the furnace to stay!"

He took his eyes from the floor. He remembered Vera had been there. Now she was

gone. It was too late to do anything about that now. He rushed to the servants' closet, found the necessary equipment and came back to the living room to clear away the evidence.

He watched the blazing fire through the open door of the furnace. There would be no evidence now. He was angry for not having completed the cremation the first time. He glanced at his watch. One o'clock.

Exhaustion and furnace heat combined to make him drowsy. His eyes closed. His head drooped to one side lolling grotesquely.

He came awake with a start. His eyes raced to the watch. One-forty. Can't afford to fall asleep like that again, he warned himself. The fire was dying away. The last particle of Aunt Sarah's wretched bones had turned to dust. He couldn't understand what odd desire had ever provoked him to keep her on the mantelpiece. His warped logic convinced him that she had still exerted her influence while she had been in the vase. But now she was gone forever. Now he would be all right. He would never again have anything to fear.

Except Vera!

She knew! And she would tell Ned Anderson.

He would have to stop her. Hurting Vera was the last thing he wanted. But if he did not silence her she would go to Ned. And Ned would believe her. And Ned would think he was insane.

That could never happen because he knew he was *not* insane! Now that Sarah was finally gone he was on the road to recovery. He'd even be able to stop the psychiatric treatments. Of what use would they be to him?

The fire died out. He sat for a while, knowing what he had to do, deciding on the best method of doing it. There wasn't much time. Time, it seemed, had always been his enemy.

He climbed the cellar stairs and entered the kitchen. The wall clock told him it was two-thirty. He could be at Vera's house by two-forty if he hurried. He knew the house well. He could slip in without being heard, silence her, and slip out. All within the space of fifteen minutes.

He passed through the living room, pausing to check once more for any traces of what had happened. The rug was spotless.

The stillness of the room

was jarred by the sound of the front door slamming.

Ned Anderson came to a halt in the doorway of the living room. He looked like anything but a doctor with his collar opened and his gray hair windswept and disarrayed. He was fighting to catch his breath.

An icy hardness pervaded his gentle old features. It told Jeffrey everything. Vera had been to see him. Now they both knew. Jeffrey staggered a step backward. For a moment a fuzziness clouded his thoughts. Events were piling up too fast for him to keep up with them.

"I've had a long night, Jeffrey," the old man spoke between short gasps, "a long hard terrible night."

"You look tired, Ned."

"I think you'd better sit down, Jeff." He entered the room as Jeffrey sat on the sofa. "Vera is at her home, suffering from a severe case of shock. She is unable to speak or to comprehend . . ." He stopped as he noticed Jeffrey was not reacting.

He was accepting the news with stoic calm. His reaction was an inner one. A state of shock! There was still time! Ned did not know yet. But he came here because he suspected. He must be watched.

"I want to know what happened, Jeffrey!"

"I don't know what you mean, Ned."

The doctor moved in front of him. His back was to the mantel. "Vera came home a little over two hours ago. Her neck was covered with blood. Someone had tried to strangle her. I know you saw her here . . ."

"How do you know that?"

Her mother told me she came to your house at nine-thirty."

"But Vera didn't tell you, did she? I mean she couldn't have told you if she's in a state of shock."

His reply astonished the old man.

"You're not going to deny seeing her, are you?"

"I haven't seen her for three days."

The doctor looked into his eyes. There was a transparent film over them, a wall that had cut him off from any further rational contact.

"Jeffrey, you realize I'm your friend, don't you?"

"Don't let him tell you that, Jeffrey!"

"Yes, I realize that, Ned."

"And you know I wouldn't try to hurt you?"

"Be careful! He has a plan! He'll put you away!"

"Yes."

"I told you I had a long night. Perhaps I can best explain why I'm here if I tell you how much has happened tonight. So I want you to listen and try . . . please try, Jeffrey . . . to understand."

Jeffrey got up from the sofa and walked to the mantelpiece. For a moment the sight of the bloodstains immobilized him. He had forgotten to clean the mantel. He turned to face the doctor, covering the stains with his back.

"Is there any reason why we can't discuss it tomorrow?"

"I must talk now, Jeffrey. I was on my way home at midnight. I bought my morning paper and before I could move away from the newsstand your name hit me smack between the eyes."

He could not conceal the shock. "My name!"

"There was a double murder in a flophouse on Front Street. A man and a young girl. They had both been strangled to death. The papers say it was done by someone of superhuman strength. The girl's neck had been mangled out of shape and punctured in two places."

"I don't understand how my name enters into it."

"The man was carrying your wallet."

The jolt unstabilized him, as if someone had split the room down the middle with a giant hatchet.

"The police proceeded on the stupid theory, presumably for the benefit of headline hungry reporters, that the man was you. That theory won't last very long."

"What do you mean?"

"You'll have to tell them the man was *not* you. If *you* don't tell them somebody else will."

"Will *you* tell them, Ned?"

The doctor hesitated. "How did that man get your wallet?"

"He was a pickpocket."

Ned's expression told him the old man thought he was lying.

"It was one o'clock by the time I reached home. I had no sooner walked in the door when the phone rang. It was Paul Carter, the Stevens family doctor. He urged me to come and see Vera at once. I went as fast as I could. I spent an hour with Vera. As I told you she was unable to say anything. But when I was through examining her it was not necessary for her to say anything. Shall I go on, Jeffrey?"

There was no doubt now that Ned had come with but one intention. He would put him away. Someplace where

he would be alone again. Alone forever. There was no use depending upon Ned to help him anymore. But there was someone he could depend upon!

"You'd better continue," he told the doctor.

"Very well. I read the newspaper story again, carefully. I knew you had gone to Front Street yesterday. I had no idea how long you had stayed but I was reasonably sure that, on your first visit, you would have difficulty meeting or talking to anyone. So I knew the murdered man was not you."

Jeffrey turned from him and faced the mirror. The reflection of the old grandfather clock began to ripple gently.

"Judging from the amount of blood on both bodies and the amount found on the window ledge I knew the killer's hands must have been covered with blood when he left the room. The person who tried to strangle Vera had blood-stained hands . . ." he paused. "Like the stains on your mantel," he concluded.

The mirror was a mass of frenzied vibrations. The room became distorted.

"You're quite a brilliant man, Ned. Let's hear the rest of it."

"Please, Jeffrey. You don't have to hear . . ."

"I insist, Ned! You say

you're my friend, you want to help me?"

The doctor eyed him cautiously. "The window in the room was twenty feet from the ground. That can be a dangerous jump for a man in a hurry. When you walked to the fireplace just now you were limping.

The room was no longer reflected. There was only the friendly mist. And in the distance, taking shape to come to his aid, was the image.

"Is that all, Ned?"

"Why did you try to kill Vera?"

"I haven't said I did try to kill her. You were trying to trap me, weren't you, Ned?"

"How did she find out about Aunt Sarah?"

"So you know about Aunt Sarah too!"

"I'm afraid I've only suspected," the doctor sighed. "You see, twice a week for six weeks just wasn't enough time to *know* anything. If I had any idea you were so close to what happened tonight I would have . . ."

"You would have what, Ned?"

The old man regarded him with sober concern. "I would have seen to it that you had gotten a rest."

"In an institution? No, Ned, you couldn't have done that."

The image was at the mirror's edge. Its ghastly face was aflame with hatred. It snarled like a chained animal straining to break loose. It wanted to kill!

"You couldn't have put me in an institution. Do you know why, Ned?"

"Jeffrey, listen to me. You must understand it won't be for always. You're not beyond salvation."

Jeffrey laughed hysterically.

"I'm not even in need of salvation. Look into the mirror, Ned."

"Jeff . . ."

"Look into the mirror and you'll see why no one can ever harm me again. My salvation is in there."

The doctor walked to the mirror. He looked into it. His expression turned to pity.

"There is nothing in the mirror, Jeffrey."

He jerked his head around in a sudden moment of panic. The image was still there, still awaiting the order that would unleash the stored up fury.

"You're wrong, Ned. Look closely."

"The poker, Jeffrey! By the fireplace! Take the poker and . . ."

"And you'll see how well protected I am. Go on, Ned. Look!"

"Hold the poker behind your back, Jeffrey! That's right! Now wait! Wait for just another moment..."

"See my slave, Ned? With him I can do anything and nobody will ever suspect!"

"Ready, Jeffrey! Get ready! Lift the poker high in the air..."

"... between us we eliminated Aunt Sarah. We did humanity a favor, did you know that, Ned? Take a good look at him..."

"Now, Jeffrey. Now!"

"... take a good last look at him..."

"Look out, Jeffrey! He has a gun! Bring the poker down! Kill him. Kill him."

The poker swiftly, accurately found its mark on the tender aging scalp. Ned fell to the floor, the grayness of his hair receding under the warm red flow of blood.

"Again Jeffrey. Once more to be sure!"

The room quaked in the aftermath of two rapid gun shots. The poker crashed on the stone hearth before the fireplace. The small automatic slipped out of Ned Anderson's dead fingers.

Jeffrey clutched at the two small holes in his stomach. He gripped the mantelpiece. His hand pressed hard against the

wound, trying to hold the blood in.

He shrieked at the image as it began to melt like burning wax before his eyes.

"Come back! Come back! I'm all right! He can't put us away now! What are you afraid of! Come back here!!"

The image did not hear him. Its hot searing features were swallowed up by the fading mist.

He looked at the floor. Ned Anderson was dead. There was only one voice left to silence. He could do it alone.

He moved toward the door. Pain shot out from every direction and tore into his garbled stomach. His face perspired. He clung dearly to the fragments of life that was left. There was enough, more than enough he told himself, to get him to Vera's house.

He opened the front door. The cold clear air gave him invigorating impetus. He passed through the huge iron gate and went into the dark empty street. A ten minute walk from there. Plenty of time. Put her out of the picture. Then safety.

His heart pumped furiously as he realized he was going in the wrong direction. Vera's house was the other way! Turn around! Turn around!

His feet would not obey!

They moved faster. Faster in the wrong direction! He ordered them to slow down! He was the master of his own feet! Why did they move in the wrong direction? They took him faster and faster.

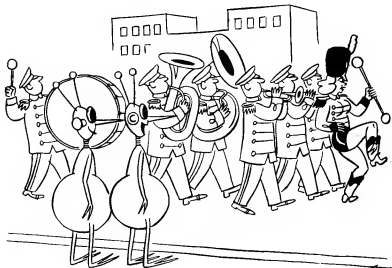
Turn around, he urged. Back to Vera's!

They were running now, still in the wrong direction. His heart could not keep up. It pumped at top speed. His

feet moved faster. Something snapped. The pumping stopped. His legs crumbled. The ground smashed into his face. His cheek rested against the soft green earth.

The river shimmered gently in the pale moonlight. A giant elm flexed a thousand green muscles in the tolerant wind. And the stars looked down on a corner of creation to find a man at peace.

THE END



"There's one leader it would be a pleasure to be taken to."

TIME SQUEEZE

By PAUL DALLAS

ILLUSTRATOR SCHROEDER

Some day science may discover exactly what time is—what it's made of. Then they may be able to twist it around. That may be good or it may not. At least, the way things are, ten minutes is ten minutes. In the future you might go out for a newspaper and come back an old man.

TENSION was heavy in the ship. The crew in their crowded quarters, the officers squeezed two to each tiny, curtained compartment, and the captain in his midget-sized cabin felt it. The duty-watch went about their business with an icy calm and precision that had not shown throughout most of the six-month patrol; those off duty sat silently in their quarters, hardly daring to speak for fear of mentioning the all-important event and thus tempting fate to cast against them.

In his cabin, crowded with equipment that allowed it to function as the control room also, Captain Clark sat hunched over a gray, metallic desk. His eyes never left the stroboscreen, and he stared with

continuous fascination at the scene unfolding below him. These curious, obviously intelligent creatures whom he had been observing for the past few months never failed to amaze him. As he watched their activity had mushroomed, doubling upon itself during the period of his patrol, till now they were teeming over every section of the satellite which they inhabited.

As far as Clark could tell, they were still unaware of his presence—as well they should be, for his ship was whirling around their planet home at speeds approaching that of light itself, and he had remained a constant 1170 miles above their surface. Only the stroboscope, synchronized to his speed and orbit, allowed him to observe any portion of



A mad, unanchored world raced by.

the globe below him which required his attention. With this instrument, he could inspect a given area as if he were hovering motionless above it, or he could achieve the effect of constant slow sweeps over the entire surface. Now he was focused on their new Headquarters, an edifice which had ballooned before his very eyes. He wondered what these incredibly active creatures might accomplish, were they not limited by a lifetime which burned itself out within two and a half weeks. Only this handicap, he mused, prevented them from reversing the position—given a longer life, they might well have been circling above *his* home, ready to pronounce an ultimatum. He shivered slightly at the thought, then dismissed it from his mind as he concentrated on noting his last minute observations.

A knock outside Clark's door caused him to snap, "Come!" He heard the rustle of the curtain behind his back as he completed his notations, then he swiveled around to find Lieutenant Peyton standing at ease just inside the doorway.

The junior officer stood uncomfortably for a long min-

ute. Finally, in answer to the questioning stare of the captain, he spoke.

"We were wondering, sir, whether the captain had any orders."

So that was it. The entire ship knew, of course, that this morning was the scheduled end of the patrol, and they could not contain themselves. Peyton, always popular with the officers and crew, had no doubt been unofficially delegated to obtain what information he could about the course of action which would follow shortly.

"Orders, Lieutenant?" Clark asked innocently. "Now let me see, how long have we been on this patrol?"

"Exactly six months, sir," Peyton answered brightly.

"Ah, to be precise, then, it has been one hundred and eighty-two days."

"Yes, sir, exactly, and today is the fin . . ."

"And every day for this period," the captain interrupted him, "I have sounded this buzzer and handed my orders to the officer of the day when I was ready."

Peyton was beginning to get the point; he shifted his weight and clutched his cap nervously.

"Yes, sir, but today we thought, that is to say, I felt

that if there were any special orders, I might . . ."

His voice trailed off miserably and Clark took pity on him.

"You might ask the off-duty watch to assemble in their wardrooms. I will speak to the entire ship on the address system."

"Yes, sir," Peyton saluted and left, with obvious relief.

Clark waited a few minutes for the word to spread; he wanted to have the attention of every man aboard. He took advantage of the pause to collect his thoughts, then depressed the switch activating the address system. He took a deep breath and leaned unnecessarily close to the microphone.

Throughout the ship, men heard the click of the power coming on, followed by the faintly crackling hiss of volume pouring from the loudspeakers. Every officer and man, whether on duty or not, strained to hear the words that would be coming. In the silent, expectant air the booming voice of the captain crashed against the eardrums. It seemed unnaturally loud.

"This is the captain speaking. As you know, this morning marks the final hours of our patrol. I want to commend the officers and men of

this ship for the way in which all of you without exception have performed arduous and often boring duties without complaint, enabling the ship to complete a most successful patrol.

"At the start of this mission, I told you that it was more difficult to endure the humdrum of efficient routine than to attack an overwhelming enemy. This difficult task you have accepted and discharged magnificently. I want to thank each of you personally, and I want to say that I feel very privileged to have been in service with you."

Clark paused. It was always hard for him to put his feelings into words. The control room was his natural element, but the microphone frightened him, except when he used it in the heat of maneuvers or battle to command his ship.

In the various compartments, the men stood motionless, waiting for him to continue. A rapidly blinking eye, a throat swallowing hard, as all eyes were fixed on the loudspeakers, were ample evidence of the deep affection in which the captain was held by his crew.

The voice resumed, "In about ten minutes, I shall transmit the final report to

Headquarters and we will then await our orders. I know that each of you joins me in the wish to proceed at once to land on the planet which it has been our duty for so long to observe. If we are accorded that honor I shall have nothing to say about the dangers, the adventures that are always possible when the unknown is first visited. You men have all been through danger, and I am sure that we are in perfect accord as to our behavior in action. If, on the other hand, we are ordered to return to base, as have been all the patrols preceding this one, our regrets must be personal and private ones. We will perform our duty; each of you must understand that the honor which you have earned by the successful completion of this important mission will be yours forever.

"I shall keep you informed of developments as soon as I have further information. Thank you."

The click signifying the end of the captain's talk was followed by a moment of intense silence and then a great hubbub swelled through the ship, as excited shipmates conjectured on the possibilities of action. Not a man aboard wished to return to base.

There was very little work to do during the next two hours. The mission had been completed, and the ship continued its lightning orbit around the planet while awaiting word from Headquarters. The officers, seeking to keep the men busy, were surprised to find an inordinate amount of unordered polishing and cleaning going on. The ship's company knew well that idle time passes slowly, so they manufactured their own work. The officers did not interfere but gathered in small groups, talking in low tones among themselves. The captain, as always during a crisis, was alone in his cabin.

Suddenly the loudspeakers sprang to life.

"This is the captain. We have just received our orders. We are to proceed as soon as practicable to the surface of the planet and . . ."

The next few words were lost in the spontaneous roar of delight which rolled its way into every corner of the craft. Clark wisely waited for the noise to subside before continuing.

"We are directed to obtain a representative of the planet and bring him back to this orbit. I need not tell you that there is a great deal of plan-

ning to be done before we can accomplish this. You must remember that this planet is in a different time ratio; the dangers presented by that fact must be carefully assayed. It will be at least twenty-four hours before we will be in a position to carry out our orders. I know I will be able to count on every man aboard to do his duty in the coming action as he has over the past long months. Your officers will keep you informed as to developments, insofar as regulations permit.

"Now hear this: All watch commands will be turned over immediately to junior officers. All other officers please assemble at once in the wardroom. Thank you."

Now that the suspense was over, now that the longed-for action was at hand, eagerness swept through the men, and around its edges, fear prickled. A good fear—right, because it sharpened the will and tempered enthusiasm with a deep seriousness of purpose.

Clark was already in the wardroom, which was right next to his cabin, as the officers arrived. He returned their salutes in the curiously perfunctory manner which was characteristic of him. He gave them a few minutes to

assemble and then, correctly assuming that they were all there, he began abruptly, as if he had just paused in mid-sentence.

"This is where we find out if Brinker knew what he was talking about. I imagine many of us are wishing that we had paid more attention," he added drily.

Professor Brinker had been one of the almost endless series of lecturers who had discoursed on various topics as a part of the regular pre-patrol briefing. He had discussed at great length the effects of transfer from one time ratio to another, and its relation to the direct speed of the body making the change. Unfortunately, the professor had been completely obsessed with the sound of his own voice and droned on and on, never using one word where five could be squeezed in. At the end of his lengthy lecture, several of the officers present had taken advantage of his offer to answer questions—and had immediately regretted it. It was Brinker's habit to provide so obscure a reply as to prompt another question, his answer to which took the discussion further afield; the whole process, snowballing at an alarming rate, threatened

to exceed in length and obfuscation his original talk. The officers were quick to grasp the inherent advantage of nodding gently and keeping their lips tightly compressed. Many of them, including Clark himself, now found themselves wishing they had listened more attentively and had been more willing to bear the pedantry of the old professor.

"Inasmuch as the planetites have given no indication of being aware of our presence," Clark went on, "the principal danger which we face is the element of time. The ratio down there, at the speed of the planet, is approximately 1440 to 1. This means, roughly, that, once we drop our speed and travel into their atmosphere, one minute will be the equivalent of a full day."

"One of our days, sir, or one of theirs?" That was Wesler. Young but earnest. Always ready to come out with the question which others might hesitate to voice for fear of revealing their deficiencies. His deficiencies, which were profound where science was concerned, never bothered Wesler.

"One minute spent under the conditions of this planet," Clark explained, "will be the

equivalent of twenty-four hours spent at home. We will in no way sense this time differential, as we can hardly exist in two time ratios at once. Its effect, however, will become apparent when we return to our own zone."

"Does that mean, sir, that if we spend even a relatively short period on the surface of the planet, we will have aged considerably by the time we return?" Porter, the second in command, was as usual backing up his captain. He knew the answer; his question was put to clarify the situation in the understandably confused minds of his junior officers.

"Exactly."

Many of the younger men smiled and shook their heads in a what-won't-they-think-of-next attitude. In their eagerness to experience the first actual time change in history, nervousness was smothered by, but remained the heart of, their ardor.

"We will carry out this operation in one almost continuous swoop. The ship must be handled in all departments as no ship has ever been run before. I must have instantaneous response to my orders. Don't anticipate me, but react immediately to all commands.

Once we start our run, there will be no room for error. Is that clear?"

A chorus of voices noised their assent. This was the stuff they understood. The handling of the ship in response to directions from the captain, time zone or no time zone, was what they were trained for and they would not let him down.

"Good. I shall start my final observations at once. We will come in somewhere in the vicinity of their headquarters. As we approach, I will select a representative. We will frame him in the high-power screen and he will remain our target. A picked squad under Lieutenant Commander Porter will be in position in the main hold. We will come in above target, the hatch-cover will be opened and we will simply drop over him.

"In the event he offers resistance, once he is in the hold, he must be prevented from doing harm either to himself or to us—but he must under no circumstances be injured. This is *most* important, and the slightest infraction of this order will be answerable to me. We want him aboard with as friendly an attitude towards us as this operation will permit. I shall attempt to select an officer of their armed

forces, but we will have no idea of his rank until he is aboard. At any rate, as the official, if unwilling, representative of his people, he will be treated with the honors due an ambassador."

"But, sir, if he fights, are we to subdue him physically?" Wesler again. To his mind, there were people you subdued, and people you didn't subdue; this person they were about to pick up seemed to belong in both categories simultaneously.

"The security of our ship is, of course, paramount," Clark answered evenly, taking care not to betray the annoyance he felt at the bluntness of the junior officer, which put into words the uncertainty in his own mind, "but the only reason for the existence of this ship, at this time, is the successful completion of the mission we are undertaking."

He was thankful that this answer seemed to satisfy the officers. At any rate, there were no further questions.

"All right, then," he concluded, "orders will be transmitted over the address system, which will be on throughout the ship. Each man to his station. Check every last detail of your responsibilities and be sure to respond at

once." He nodded to Porter. "Commander, sound the action stations."

As the harsh gong clanged deafeningly in the metal craft, the officers left the wardroom on the double, hurrying to their posts, each determined to perform with the perfection their captain had requested.

Major Steven Richardson sat at the breakfast table reading the newspaper. As a public relations officer, he was scanning the morning's crop of stories which bore a direct relationship to his own work. He was glad to see that the squabble between Dr. Falke and Defense Administrator Styre, over how much of the public money should be allotted to pure research and how much to weapons on hand, was being reported in a manner most favorable to Defense. The aftermath of his battle for public attention was making itself felt in a head that ached and a stomach which alternately threatened to burn to a cinder and jump clear out of the body. Richardson would not have minded the latter.

He struggled through the meal, downing a few solids and much liquid, while his eyes wandered over the columns of type. Ilean was adept

at these problem mornings, and hovered daintily in the background, filling a cup or removing a plate, but never intruding. At last, the food began to have its effect, and Richardson felt that he could face the day with a reasonable probability of survival. He put down the paper and got experimentally to his feet.

"Think you can make it?" Ilean smiled sympathetically.

"Oh, sure. Never felt better," he lied, stretching and yawning. "Luckily I don't have anything much on tap that can't wait, so I'll just show up, sign a couple of handouts and make it back here for lunch. How about a swim this afternoon?"

"Sounds good." Ilean fell enthusiastically in with his plans. "Suppose I fix up a picnic lunch, and we can leave just as soon as you get back. We might go over to the bay."

He patted her on the cheek and kissed her lightly. "Wonderful. I'll get here as soon as I can. Before twelve, if possible."

The thought of stretching out on the white sand beside the lapping waters of the bay gave impetus to his recovery. He put on his blouse, grabbed his brief case and went out the front door. Ilean, standing prettily in her housecoat at

the half-open door, waved good-bye as he swung down the street. For a moment she watched the long strides, the peculiar tilt of the head on the receding figure which she would have recognized anywhere as her man, and then she started for the kitchen, to see what it contained that could be put together for a picnic lunch. It was a meal well thought out and cleverly executed—but it was destined to remain uneaten.

Richardson had walked eight blocks and was in the process of crossing the great square. His office building loomed in sight on the far side, and he quickened his pace as he made his way across the large empty plaza. He was walking erect, as a soldier should, his eyes tightened to slits against the glare of the reflected sun, when an enormous shadow fell over him. His first thought was that a cloud had wandered into the area, but this seemed improbable, as the sky ahead was blue and naked. Without breaking stride, he looked up curiously to scan the sky overhead.

He stopped dead in his tracks, the urgent electric flashes running through his entire nervous system counseling him both to run for

shelter and to throw himself flat on the ground. He had time to obey neither impulse, and was standing there open-mouthed when the giant ship, its hatch open like a hungry mouth, swooped down and swallowed him.

The contrasting darkness destroyed his vision momentarily, and he felt himself pressed against the floor of the craft as the hatch clanged shut and the ship accelerated. At last a constant speed was attained and the pressure relaxed. Richardson got to his feet and found his eyes becoming accustomed to the dim light. Creatures who except for their outlandish dress might have been his next door neighbors, surrounded him, eyeing him warily.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded angrily. "Who are you people and what do you think you are doing? You'll never get away with it," he added, feeling that somehow a rebellion must be the cause of this abduction. It must be, his racing mind told him, a rebellion of the scientists. How else explain the weird machine they possessed? "I'm an officer, you know, and . . ."

"We know, sir," one of them answered in a concilia-

tory tone. "Captain Clark wishes to speak with you, sir. He will explain everything."

"Take me right to him," Richardson said, nodding. "In the meantime, I want you all to realize that those of you who continue to support this fantastic adventure are to consider yourselves under military arrest." He followed the leader of the squad, clambering up ladders and making his way through the twisting narrow passages.

Captain Clark had watched the entire proceedings on the screen in his quarters. He sat at his desk, trying to rehearse the opening moments of the coming scene. He tried several approaches, but they all sounded stilted and forced to him. His planning was cut short by the knock outside his cabin.

"Come," he called out, swinging his chair to face the door. The curtain parted to reveal the stranger, and Captain Clark stood up.

"Please come in," he said. "I know this must be something of a shock to you, but please realize that we are here on a mission of peace and we intend you and your people no harm. I'm Captain Clark."

"I am Major Richardson," Steven answered as he took in

the details of the compartment. It was like no other he had seen. "And what, might I ask, are you Captain of?"

"Why, of this ship," Clark answered, somewhat taken aback by the surprising reaction of his guest.

"I mean, in whose pay are you? I suppose some crackpot scientists' organization. Well, let me tell you . . ."

Clark realized that this man was confused. He could understand that; his own reactions to similar conditions would appear very foolish, he knew. He hoped that he would behave as well as this officer if he were ever put to the test.

"Ah, I think I understand," he said. "Please be seated, and I shall try to explain everything to you. I'm afraid you're in for a bit of a shock."

Richardson sat on the edge of a chair, erect. Alert for trouble. As Clark spoke to him, he gradually sagged. Either the man was a raving maniac—or this was the most fantastic thing that had ever happened in recorded history. Clark recognized the struggle taking place in the major's mind.

"Here," he said, "take a look at the screen."

Richardson walked over and gazed at the picture. Clark flipped through the

various powers, finally focusing at maximum magnification on the major's office building.

"You can see for yourself that what I've told you is accurate. You were chosen pretty much at random, because we had no other way of contacting your people."

Richardson left the screen and crossed over to his chair. He sat down, nodding weakly. Then he collected himself.

"All right," he said. "Let's say that you're not from this planet at all. Let's say that you wanted to contact us. Let's say you have succeeded so far. Now what?"

"The point is, major," Clark spoke slowly, evenly, knowing that this was the tough part, "your planet has been found ideal as a testing ground for some experiments we must undertake and we, well, the experiments are very dangerous and may result in the total destruction of the planet, so we must ask you to move."

"How do you mean, move? You mean all of us? The whole planet?"

"All of you on the planet, yes, but not the planet itself, of course," Clark answered. "We have located a planet on which you would all be very comfortable. It compares in

many respects with your own—as a matter of fact, it is larger, and the weather seems better than much that you have here."

Richardson wiped his forehead. "Look here," he said weakly, "you can't mean it. You can't expect to just uproot the inhabitants of an entire world and shift them to some other place in the universe. To begin with, how could you go about doing it? The actual physical move, I mean. And in any case, our people would never agree to go."

"I'm afraid they have no choice." Clark hated to put it so bluntly, but when you came right down to it, that's how matters stood, and there was nothing he could do but carry out his orders.

"Hah! You may be very modern and everything," Richardson snorted, "but if you think we have no other choice, it shows you don't understand my people at all. If you think they would simply stand still while you tried to cart them away, you have another guess coming. Why, the place you have in mind is very likely in another solar system altogether—and I can assure you the very idea is unthinkable."

"Yes, naturally you'd have to expect a definite change in systems, major, but, as I've said, the planet we've picked for you is very nice and we'd stand the entire expense of the move. Don't worry about how it's to be done; I can assure you the whole thing has been most carefully planned, and when the time comes the operation will proceed smoothly. And we would not, of course, expect any resistance. What I mean is," he added hastily, as he saw that the major was about to interrupt with a hot protest, "that the move would have to be agreed to by your government on behalf of the people."

"That's an agreement I promise you will never be signed," Steven said positively. "I have, of course, no authority to speak for my government on any such matter, but you can take it from me that my personal opinion on this point is going to be shared by every single person down there. You'll never get any such agreement under any circumstances."

"The unfortunate thing is," Clark came right to the point, "that with or without your approval, we will be forced to go ahead with our tests, and . . ." He shrugged and

held out his hands, palms upward.

"You can't mean it!" Richardson was frightened, but his indignation overcame his fear. "You mean to say that if we refuse to give up our home, our heritage, our very planet, you'd wipe us out? You'd eliminate an entire life system just to conduct some tests?"

Clark remained silent a moment, confirming the major's fears. Then he said, "I'm afraid, major, I have to ask for an immediate answer."

"I can't give you any answer. Why, anything I say would have no binding force on my government."

"Of course, of course," Clark agreed. "I understand that. We're going to get you back on your planet. There you will contact the people who are in a position to negotiate such an agreement, then we will again meet with you for their reply. You will explain to them, please, that any attempt at evasion will be treated as an answer in the negative."

"Why don't you come down and talk to them yourself?" Richardson suggested, realizing the difficulties which he would face when he tried to relate this interview to his superiors. "You could nego-

tiate directly and get a much clearer picture of our position."

"I'm afraid that would be impossible," Clark said. "The time factor, you see. If we come into your zone, we're affected by your time ratio, which is much more rapid than ours."

Richardson looked at his watch. "The time ratio is exactly the same," he blurted. "I've been here about an hour, and it's just 10:03. There's not much of a difference there."

"I'm afraid you've not had much experience with this sort of thing, major," Clark smiled. "But since you are in our zone, you're affected by our ratios. Down there, things are moving at a much faster clip. If we stayed down there any appreciable time, we'd be giving up a larger portion of our lives. That wouldn't be very fair, would it? So you see we can't come down."

Richardson said nothing.

"Mr. Porter will take you to the hatch," Clark resumed, "and you will be set down. We will come back for you."

"How much time will we have?" Richardson inquired.

"We will return for you exactly one hour after we leave you. You must have an answer in that time or we shall

regard it as a refusal to cooperate."

"One hour!" Richardson was again indignant. "Why we couldn't possibly arrange so important an affair in one hour. It's utterly impossible. You might just as well start shooting now, or whatever you're going to be doing. An hour is altogether ridiculous."

Clark remained adamant. "You people accomplish much in one hour, and that is all the time I can give you. Please follow Mr. Porter."

The interview was over and Richardson, with a hopeless shrug, turned and went out the door.

With a grace and agility which he would not have believed the big ship could muster, Richardson found himself deposited in the middle of the square from which he had been snatched a little over an hour before. A group of soldiers, having witnessed his sudden appearance from the skies, were just recovering from shock. A sergeant was the first to regain use of his faculties, and he came running over.

"That ship," he cried out, "or whatever it was, was it attacking you, sir?"

Richardson recognized Sergeant Miller, who worked

in the office down the hall from his own.

"No, sergeant, not exactly, but thanks for the help."

"Holy smoke, it's Major Richardson," the sergeant yelped, his mouth opening in surprise.

"That's right," Richardson agreed. "it's me. I've got to be getting along. Thanks again." He started toward his office at a fast pace. Suddenly he felt his arm being grabbed. He turned in surprise, to find Sergeant Miller holding him.

"Hey, wait a minute," the sergeant said. "I mean, sir, everybody's been looking for you. Colonel Norton will want to see you at once, sir."

"Why, what's up?" Richardson asked, wondering if his abduction had been witnessed. It would make his job a great deal easier if it had. On the other hand, it would not do to let Miller in on any of this before Headquarters had been given the news.

"Why it's you, sir," the sergeant gasped. "Everybody's been wondering what happened to you. If I may say so, there's been some talk about it. Both good and bad, I mean."

"Exactly what is your point, sergeant?" Richardson asked. "I'm an hour late, and you mean this has thrown the

entire department into a loop?"

"An hour! You've been missing for weeks, sir. You'd better come with me to the colonel, sir. He wants to see you."

Richard saw that to argue would merely delay things.

"Come on, then."

The colonel was a hard man to convince. Without comment he listened to the sergeant's story of how he had found Major Richardson battling with a machine that soared into space in the wink of an eye. When this tale was corroborated by five of the sergeant's men, the colonel dismissed the enlisted men and turned to Richardson for an explanation.

The major had decided that his best course lay in giving no information except that it was a matter of life and death that a committee comprising the President, the General Staff and whatever scientists could be gathered immediately be convened at once to hear what he had to say.

The obvious sincerity of an officer whom he had known for years, coupled with the sergeant's evidence, finally tipped the scale and, placing his own chances for promotion on the line, Colonel Norton picked

up a special private-wire phone and arranged for the group to be seated in the special War Conference room in fifteen minutes.

He replaced the phone and for a full minute stared hard at the young major. The colonel's brow glistened with perspiration and his temple pulsed rapidly.

"You'd better have something to tell them, boy," he said in a low voice, "or it'll be my neck." He didn't mention that in the services, wrath always moved directly downward, increasing in ferocity as it reduced in rank. He didn't have to; it was understood.

The compelling urgency of his recent experience enabled Richardson to enter the conference and face a committee which, by its extreme rank and eminence, would have shrunk him into silence under normal conditions. He told his story as briefly as he could, taking care to include as many details of the strange ship's performance as he could remember from his talk with Captain Clark and from his own observation. He told of the ultimatum and, checking his watch, he concluded, "So at this point, gentlemen, we have fifteen minutes to decide on an answer. Captain Clark

will be here for his answer, and I think we should have one."

There was a momentary silence, which was broken by the rasping voice of Marshal Pilor. "What are these experiments which the captain said he would be carrying out, and exactly how would they result in our wholesale destruction?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I don't know, sir," Richardson answered. "Captain Clark never described the specific nature of the tests, and I didn't think it was important at the time."

"Not important!" The Marshal bristled. "How can I be expected to evaluate the potential of the attack and prepare a defense, without knowing in what form the attack will materialize? And our ability to defend is a vital factor in our reaching any sort of a decision here."

The President's calm tones took Richardson off a very uncomfortable hook. "I don't believe that the actual nature of these experiments is the paramount thing. The fact that this strange craft from outer space can perform as it does must lead us to the conclusion that they are in a position to do us great harm. What we must seek is an ave-

nue of delay, in order to allow our scientists to study the situation and see what steps can be taken to protect ourselves and our people."

"Mr. President," Marshal Pilor's harsh voice filled the room. "We have no time to delay. Scientists cannot evaluate a ship they have never seen—and by the time they see it, we will be lost. I suggest that we order an immediate mobilization and take our chances. No matter what the nature of the attack, if we can come to grips with the enemy, we shall give a good account of ourselves. Anything is better, sir, than merely waiting defenselessly for the blow to fall."

The four scientists had been huddled together, conferring among themselves in whispers while the Marshal had been talking, and one of them stood and addressed the meeting. It was Dr. Mawson, the top man in the field of physics. His great bush of white hair commanded the attention of the committee as he spoke in his peculiar, high-pitched voice.

"We," he said, indicating his brother scientists, "do not always have to see what we are studying. Many facts can be inferred from relatively small amounts of true infor-

mation. If what Major Richardson has told us about the speed and behavior characteristics of this craft is accurate, then it is entirely possible that we may build a theory which would enable us to discover more about the craft, including its limitations."

"In ten minutes!" Pilor's voice was heavy with scorn. Discovery of the craft's limitations implied a defense against it. But not in ten minutes, and the marshal was impatient to be up and doing. Conflict was his business and, when a threat was made against the peace and security of his planet, his first and only thought was to resist violently, physically and totally.

"I was coming to that." Mawson always spoke quietly, patiently, as though explaining things to a child. "We have, I believe, more than ten minutes in which to work. Since this Captain Clark was no doubt talking about time in his own ratio, his one hour ultimatum will expire here exactly two months after he gave it."

The President sat up, electrified. "Are you sure of this?"

Mawson shrugged. "As sure as one can be of these things. The relativity of time is well

known to us—has been for years. Major Richardson's disappearance for two months when he believed himself absent for only an hour fits in exactly with our calculations. If I can have the men I want and the equipment I need, we shall see what we can do within that time."

The President made an instant decision. "I shall draw up an executive order immediately, giving you full authority to draw whatever you need in the way of manpower and material."

"I won't need much. There are three models of the UX-332 which are assembled and working. I shall want them all, installed in the Science Building by morning. That must be top priority—without the calculators we won't be able to do a thing. I'll assemble a crew to work under me and my colleagues here.

"And, of course, we will require the services of Major Richardson."

"Anything you want, doctor," the President said. "And while you're working, I believe we should declare a state of emergency and order a general mobilization."

"Only limitedly," Mawson said, looking directly at Marshal Pilor. "I must ask that the military be under my

command. They could do more harm than good by making a show of preparations which might easily be visible to those above us. If we come up with anything, we shall, naturally, call them in and ask their help in implementing any actions which may be necessary."

"If you come up with anything," Marshal Pilor started to explode, but he was silenced by the upturned hand of the President.

"As you wish, doctor," he said. "Marshal Pilor will await word from you before taking any action. I appreciate that our only chance lies in science—and I am sure that you will have the complete cooperation of everybody on this planet." Every man in the room, including the marshal, nodded his assent. "And when do you propose to start?" the President asked.

"At once, of course," Mawson answered, getting to his feet. "Major Richardson, will you come with us, please? We can't waste a minute."

Richardson cleared his throat nervously. "There's just one thing," he began awkwardly. "Although it seems to me as if I have only been away from home for a few hours, it appears I've been

gone a couple of months. My wife . . ."

"Ah, yes, of course." Dr. Mawson smiled understandingly. "Suppose you go on home for an hour and let her know you're all right. I would not try to explain too much to her. You might just tell her that you were away on official secret business. That will be close to the truth, eh?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir." Richardson saluted the committee and as he was leaving he heard Mawson call out to him, "Mind now, major, one of our hours, not one of theirs!" He smiled and made no reply. He looked forward to, and dreaded a little, his hour with Ilean.

Captain Clark finished a hasty lunch and returned to his quarters. In another fifteen minutes they would be going in to pick up the planetites' answer, and all aboard were tuned to that fine edge which impending action brings to trained crews. Porter, in response to an almost imperceptible nod, followed Clark to his cabin, and they sat before the screen, viewing the incredible activity below them.

Clark shook his head in wonderment. "An extraordinary people," he said. "Think

what they could accomplish if they had our time!"

"Do you think they'll accept our ultimatum, sir?" Porter was nervous and could not put his mind to anything but the matter at hand.

Clark's lips pressed into a thin, white line. "I hope so. It'll be a tough decision for them, of course—but I don't see what else they can do. Put yourself in their position. A strange craft comes whirling in from outer space. Its very existence implies a force beyond anything they can comprehend. They would be foolish to resist."

"But if they reject us? Do they all get wiped out?" Porter looked a little sick at the thought, although, in the best traditions of the service, he meant to do the job assigned him and leave matters of conscience to his superiors.

"Well, of course, our job is merely to deliver the message and pick up the answer," Clark said. "What happens afterwards will be no affair of ours. But I'd bet my rank that we're merely conducting a gigantic bluff. Can you just imagine public opinion tolerating an offhand order to wipe out an entire planet with its inhabitants? I'd hate to be the one to give such an order." He shuddered and added more

sombrely, "Or carry it out."

The pre-set controls sounded their warning, and action stations were immediately manned. Porter ran along the passageways down to the main hatch, to supervise the taking aboard of the messenger from the planet. Clark stayed at the screen to oversee the operation. As they approached the surface of the planet, the craft, which had seemed a speck in the vastness of space, became bulkier and its huge size became again apparent. But it still handled like a toy, responding instantly to its controls. They swooped in. Clark heard the hatch clang open as they hovered over the waiting Richardson.

Then Clark called for full power—and got no response! In irritation, he called again and, perceiving no reaction, his hand leapt angrily to the master control, activating the emergency units which enabled him to operate the ship directly. But still there was no answering surge of power and the great ship hung as if dead, a few feet above the surface of the planet. Clark rang the engine room to ask for a report—but the officer there was as bewildered as the captain.

"There's nothing wrong down here, sir," came the answer. "No breakdowns of any kind."

"Then why aren't we moving?" Clark roared.

He received an answer which sounded like "Search me," and, with an oath, he called for Porter. This was serious. You couldn't very well impress the inhabitants of a planet with your super powers, if your craft broke down and settled on the ground looking no more formidable than a bandstand in the park. And the horrible thought now uppermost in Clark's mind was the realization that, having come into the planet's sphere of time, every minute spent was using up days of precious time. Everyone aboard was aging at a fantastic rate.

Porter's footsteps sounded outside his cabin. Without the customary knock, the curtains were thrown apart to reveal the second-in-command and, behind him, Major Richardson. Clark ignored the planetite and spoke directly to Porter.

"Have you any idea what's happened?" he asked.

Porter stood there with his mouth hanging open, his lower jaw working as if he were trying to say something, but

Richardson answered for him.

"You are being held prisoner, captain," he said evenly, matter-of-factly. "The President wishes to speak to you."

Clark's hand flashed to his holster, but even before it reached there he realized the futility of the move and let his fingers drop limply.

"That's good, captain," Richardson said. "There would be no point in killing, or even threatening me. You'd still find yourself a prisoner. And your main concern right now is to obtain your release. The President will be aboard momentarily and he will talk with you."

A call came through from the guard at the hatch: a party of planetites wanted to board. Clark gave permission, and soon his cabin was crowded with planetites. Marshal Pilor, Dr. Mawson and the President spent a few wordless minutes examining the interior of the control room with interest.

Then Pilor's harsh voice spoke out. "You are Captain Clark, I suppose." Clark acknowledged his identity and Pilor said, abruptly, "This is our President. He will make things plain to you."

The President offered his hand, then introduced Dr.

Mawson. Taking no notice of Clark's oversight in not inviting him to sit down, the President chose a chair, seated himself and crossed his legs.

"Now then, captain," he said pleasantly, "I understand from Major Richardson that you, on behalf of your people, have come to order us off our planet."

"That is correct, sir," Clark answered. He remained standing. "And the temporary disability of my ship in no way affects . . ."

"Ah, but it does, my dear captain," the President broke in gently, "because, you see, we have effected the disability of your ship—and you will understand that this changes matters considerably."

"Would you mind explaining, sir, exactly what it is you have done?" Clark's position was difficult. He could not bring himself to regard these planetites as his captors. For so long, he had been observing them from on high, as a boy might watch the labor of ants, that it did not seem conceivable that they had in some manner reversed the situation.

The President smiled. "To tell you the truth, captain, I could not actually explain

the details at all. Dr. Mawson, our chief scientist, is the one who worked it out. But suffice it to say that we have discovered that your source of energy lies in cosmic space. We are not sure precisely what the energy is, nor how you utilize it, but we have found a way to shield you from it while you are on or near our planet. You are not receiving energy, therefore, nor will you until we again permit it."

"I hope you understand, Mr. President, that this course is useless to you." Clark still hadn't given up. "What happens to me or this ship in the service of our home is unimportant. Don't you realize that your entire planet can be destroyed from such a distance that your shield would be worthless?"

The President held up a graceful hand. "That remains to be seen, captain. Let me put it to you this way. Today, after a period of unmatched production of our minds and machinery, we are enabled to immobilize your ship. This was accomplished in what, I am given to understand, you regard as one hour. Our production continues at this very moment. Today the product of this tremendous outpouring of energy allows us to

shield this one location—tomorrow, the entire planet will be protected. Then we shall build stations on our adjoining planets. It will take us time, to be sure, but when we are involved with you and your people, time is our ally. We can accomplish these things more quickly than you could return to your home and alert your ships.

"We have no quarrel with you, captain. But the time factor, as well as the obvious discrepancy in our separate advancements, makes it advisable that your people and mine have nothing more to do with each other. We live in peace, a state it took us thousands of years to achieve, and we would prefer not to get involved in foreign entanglements of any sort."

"I think I understand you, sir, and see your point," Clark said, impressed by the easy confidence and gentle manner of the President, "but is there no message I can carry back to my people? Even apart from the original purpose of my mission, I mean, sir," he added.

With a wry smile the President replied, "I'm afraid not, captain. We just do not wish to become involved. Go in peace, and

merely carry the message that none of your ships will ever again be allowed to enter our solar system. Tell your superiors that we will be in a position to immobilize any craft that attempts penetration. And, of course, we will not treat any future invasion of our area as leniently. All ships, and their crews, will in the future be immobilized permanently.

"I believe that is all we can say to each other, captain. It's been a pleasure meeting you."

With that, the President stood up and the group of planetites made for the exit.

At the door, Dr. Mawson spoke a word. "We realize your anxiety as regards time, captain. As soon as we are away from the craft, the shield will be switched off and you will be allowed on your way. May I suggest that your controls be returned to neutral, or the sudden surge of power will catch you unawares."

In a daze, Clark thanked him and, blushing furiously at his own failure to realize the danger, he neutralized the controls.

The President and his party left the ship and stood a little way off. Dr. Mawson

raised his arm in signal, and Clark again heard the familiar hum of activity aboard. He heard the main hatch seal itself and then, taking personal control of the ship, he raised it from the ground and sent it soaring into space. He sent an immediate report to Headquarters and set course for home, applying full power. At last there was nothing to do but endure the journey.

Porter came into the room. He took off his cap and sank heavily into a chair.

"Well, that's that," he said, not wishing to give any hint of the utter vacuum which occupied his mind when he tried to analyze the preceding events. "What do you make of it, captain?"

Clark shrugged. "There isn't much one can make of it," he answered. "Unbelievable as it may seem, they're in a position to make it stick. It's a pity, in a way, because we could each learn much."

The big ship sighed through the emptiness which surrounded it, and Captain Clark began to feel comfortable once more. He was aboard his ship and it was in nice control. He was speeding on a true course, and Earth and its problems were far away.

THE END

FANTASTIC



A SLIGHT CASE OF GENIUS

By E. K. JARVIS

ILLUSTRATOR SCHROEDER

There was an extraordinary talent in the family; none of the relatives could have believed a mind to be possessed of such powers. That was why they kept dying.

ELLIOT and Penelope died last month in an automobile crash. This afternoon the beneficiaries will gather in Elliot's library to hear the

will. Frankly I'm going to be bored by the whole dreary affair. I already know what my share will be. I saw the will before.

In fact it was one of the reasons I killed them.

You probably think I'll be uncomfortable, listening to the last will and testament of two people I've just recently murdered. But I won't be in the least uncomfortable. You see, the others think I'm childish. They think I don't have the mental capacity to understand what a will is all about. So I'll just pretend I *don't* know. And I'll behave childishly. And by doing exactly what they expect me to do I'll fool them, the same way I've been fooling them for years.

Not even Elliot and Penelope knew my secret. Toward the end, though, it seemed to me they were beginning to suspect something. That's another reason I had to kill them.

Oh, I'd better mention that there is one person I have *not* fooled. That's Doctor Taylor. He's a smart man. Smart enough to know that I'm not an idiot. Beyond that I'm not sure just how *much* he knows. He's aware of how they've always treated me and he's never liked them because of it. But I'm not sure his understanding and tolerance of me could be stretched to condone murder.

It does pose a delicate problem.

The elimination of Elliot and Penelope was only the first stage of a plan. You see, my brother Herb is the oldest child. He's twenty-one. So, naturally, he inherits the bulk of the estate. The trouble is that Herb has never been much of a brother. Where understanding and compassion were concerned he was an even greater failure than Elliot and Penelope.

By the way, it may seem terribly irreverent to keep referring to my mother and father by their given names. But the fact is I've been doing it since I was a year old. That happens to be one of the more remarkable things about me. I have the ability to recall any incident, however minute, all the way back to the age of one. Occasionally I still reveal flashes of memory, incidents that have been buried and forgotten by everyone else, just to be amused by everyone's gaping, stunned reaction. Doctor Taylor is the only person who knows I have this talent.

Anyway, when I first managed my infantile pronunciation of "Elliot" and "Penelope" everyone thought it was cute beyond words. Unfortunately, in their eyes, it was

just about the last cute thing I ever did. The years that followed found life with the three of them unbearable. They were all afflicted with the same insufferable superiority complex.

Their biggest mistake was to treat me as a totally helpless, brainless creature. So, without ever divulging my secret, I set out to prove that I could do quite well without them.

To begin with I arranged for my own education. It was rather fortunate that I chose to do this because as time went on it became painfully apparent that they never intended to do anything about it themselves.

The trouble with Elliot and Penelope was that they spent every hour of their adult lives in the pursuit of money. They were careful to give my brother Herb every educational consideration since he would someday inherit the business and, in turn, spend every hour of *his* adult life in the pursuit of money.

That they did not shower me with the same considerations is at least partially understandable. A daughter does not usually inherit a business. Therefore a daughter doesn't require the same kind of education as a son.

The fallacy in that kind of thinking is best illustrated by the fact that I'm a genius and Herb is hard put to carry on an intelligent conversation.

My self-education began soon after I first broached the subject of the library. I had stolen a look at a mathematical textbook Herb was studying. I was fascinated by it and wanted to read more books like it. I can't describe the scorn and condescension that greeted my request. One would think I had asked for the moon. When their first reaction wore off they began to laugh at me. Little did they realize what a terrible mistake they were making whenever they laughed at me. It only bolstered my determination to someday repay them for all of their cruel stupidity.

It was most difficult during those times when they chose to treat me like a demented half-breed. There was always the burning temptation to reveal my secret. Sometimes I came within syllables of blurt-ing it out. But I always caught myself just in time. I knew it would be dangerous if they knew. I knew that after the initial shock had subsided they would resent me even more.

But about the library. It's a huge room next to the parlor. I've counted all the books in it. There are ten thousand, four hundred and forty-two. The library always used to be locked. Elliot, Penelope and Herb were the only ones who had keys.

The day Herb discovered his key was missing he simply took a mold of the lock and had a new key made. It was precisely what I knew he would do. And I knew further that he would never even suspect that his original key had been stolen. That always was and still is, I think, the most disgusting thing about Herb. Placed in any given situation you know just how he'll react and what he'll do. Elliot and Penelope were the same way.

Once I had Herb's key I practically lived in the library. I arranged a rigid schedule so as not to get caught. I read mostly during the hours they were away making money. (Elliot was president of the company, Penelope was vice-president and treasurer and Herb was just an employee learning the business. They paid him seventy-five dollars a week or about seven and a half times what he was worth).

I read one book after an-

other until I had gone through everything on the lower shelves. Then I was faced with a problem. The shelves go all the way to the ceiling which would require my climbing to reach more books. My legs are not straight and therefore have never been very strong. At first I was afraid to climb.

But I had already read everything from home cooking to the relativity theory and I was eager to absorb more. I couldn't bring a ladder into the library without causing suspicion. So, in spite of the danger involved, I was forced to climb. I had a good many anxious moments getting at those higher books. If I had ever fallen the consequences would have been disastrous. Not only would I have been discovered but I would have damaged my legs to the extent that they might never be straight.

Fortunately luck was always with me. I never fell and I was never caught.

It was in the library one day that I came across the safe hidden behind a set of encyclopedias. My curiosity was boundless. I had to know what was inside! Of course it was locked and I hadn't the faintest notion of the combination.

But I'm a remarkably resourceful person. I immediately consulted Elliot's cross index file and recorded the name of every book that contained any information about locks. After two more hours of searching and reading I found a book that taught me the mechanics of a wall safe. I set about then to determine all of the possible mathematical combinations.

Once that was done I went to work on the safe. It was a long, arduous task requiring the utmost patience. Standing as I was on my own makeshift ladder, my legs soon tired and I began to grow weak. I had tried almost two hundred combinations and I wasn't sure how much longer I could last before my sensitive legs gave way. However, just as I was about to give it up until the next day, I hit upon the right combination.

The safe contained a small tin box. And inside the box I found the will. My heart sank as I read it. Gradually it became clear to me that the most gruesome indignity they could visit upon me would not come until after they were gone.

The will stated that Herb was to receive the bulk of the estate. There were several minor bequeaths to servants,

secretaries, lawyers and so forth. For me there was nothing!

I read the document again. And then a third time. Only once did I find my name mentioned.

"... in the event of Herbert Pelham's death his share of the estate ..."

There was no consolation in that eventuality. I knew that when Herb inherited the money that would be the end of me. He is the kind of person who puts himself to no good use on this earth and lives to a ripe old age. That involved too many years for me to wait.

In that moment my hatred for Elliot and Penelope knew no limits. I decided then and there what must be done.

I had never done much reading on the art of murder. But I had done enough to know that I was in an ideal position to commit the perfect crime. My first thought was to eliminate Herb. I discarded this after realizing it would be too much of a gamble. If Herb died while they were still alive they would be in a position to alter the will and keep it unfavorable to me.

First things had to come first. With Elliot and Penel-

ope out of the way Herb would still inherit everything and when sufficient time had passed it would be simple to get rid of him too.

The next few days found me spending my time in the garage with George, our chauffeur. George and I have never much cared for each other. He hates it when anyone asks questions because there aren't very many questions he knows the answers to. I used to think that George at least had some knowledge of automobiles. But after I stole the two manuals from his bench in the garage I learned differently.

I spent a day reading the automotive manuals and when I was through I knew more about automobiles than George would ever know. And I was quite certain that, after I had tampered with the Chrysler, he would never suspect a thing.

The physical part of the job was the toughest. I had to do it quite late at night after everyone was asleep. And again it was my legs that deterred me the most. After all, I had never been inside the hood of a car and I found getting there a slippery proposition indeed! I'm afraid I cut myself a couple of times and

I managed to get grease all over my hands and face. But after two hours of exhaustive work I had removed the hydraulic fluid from the brake compartment and, for insurance purposes, filed down the steering wheel pin.

The next morning they left for the office as usual. But they never got there. The car was found at the foot of a ravine about four miles from home.

So this afternoon they're going to read the will. And Herb is going to inherit everything. I'll let him enjoy it for a while, maybe a year or two. Then I'll take over. It'll be easier with Herb. He owns a Jaguar. It's much smaller than a Chrysler and therefore more convenient for me to fix.

As a matter of fact Herb is not even going to be my next victim.

There is still the matter of Doctor Taylor!

I have always had great respect for the doctor. Yesterday I learned that I had been grossly underestimating the man.

There is a door in the hall outside my room. I have been told, and always believed, that it led to a closet. I never quite understood why the door was always locked. I can

think of no other closet doors that are locked.

Yesterday the door was *not* locked; I suppose because nothing has been normal in the house since the "accident." My woman's curiosity urged me to open it and venture inside.

The shock staggered me.

Instead of a closet I found a small room with a chair, a desk and a window. And *my* room was visible through the window! I did not have to go back to my room to know what was on the other side of that window. I already knew it was a large mirror.

The desk contained several note pads and charts, all bearing Doctor Taylor's name, address and phone number. The charts were entitled:

"Observatory Report."

On the top chart beneath the title I recognized Doctor Taylor's handwriting.

"October 4th . . ."

That was yesterday.

". . . Name; Laura Pelham—Age; Four years, three months, twenty-five days. Comments: Child continues incredibly rapid advancement . . ."

The rest is unimportant. I don't know how long he has been observing me and there seems to be no way I can find out without giving myself away.

But there is one thing I am sure of. The good doctor is aware that he is dealing with a mind that is every bit as mature as his own. That being the case I cannot afford to let him tell anyone else.

I found out this morning that he drives an old Buick. I certainly don't look forward to getting cut again and having to clean that filthy grease from my hands and face. But what has to be done has to be done. . . .

THE END

**DON'T MISS THE POWERFUL NEW
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THE early light roused him, striking his face, finding his closed eyes. He stretched wearily, protesting against consciousness. His forehead was throbbing with slow ferocity, and he groaned. It was the sound of the nightmare from which he had awakened. For a sleepy moment, he couldn't remember. Then his hand rubbing his cheek touched something sticky.

His hand fell, and his sleepiness was gone. With sickening clarity he knew the stickiness on his cheek was blood. He had killed Alice! God help him, it wasn't a nightmare. It was *true*. He put his head in his hands, seeing even as he did so, the long deep scratches on his bare arms. He couldn't believe it. He had killed a woman!

Now he could remember everything. How she had struggled, clawed and fought. And how quiet it had been. Violence without sound. Alice didn't have time to scream.

Ruth, the only other person in the house, had slept through it all. And when he had finished his work, when Alice's body went limp and resistance ceased forever, he had come back to this room. He had fallen onto this bed, happily finding the sleep of the innocent.

IN THIS



She stood like a

DARK MIND

Is murder ever justified? He knew the answer was—no! But he was the most desperate of men and somehow he would find justification for killing his wife.

by INEZ McGOWAN

ILLUSTRATOR GARNER



pitiful ghost between them and their love.

Now the throbbing in his head grew and he groaned again. In an hour Susannah, the cleaning woman, would be here. He must get rid of Alice's body before then. He must find a way, some way, out of this horror. He must not panic. He had killed Alice. That was all that really mattered. He had destroyed her in time.

From the first night he'd known she was wrong for this place, that she would bring disaster. Instinct had warned him and made him wary.

He remembered the first night, a month ago, when he had met her. That night he'd gotten off the 7:10 train, as he always did, clutching his brief case and thinking about supper. As he said good night to his commuting acquaintances and walked to his car, he felt the city-bred tension within him ease away before the peace of the suburban village.

He drove, as always, with careful expertness through the main street traffic. Then leaving the town behind, his car began to climb the long hill up to Roseberry Lane.

For the past four years, heart trouble had imprisoned his wife, Ruth, in their home. So that for four years George

had driven to and from the station alone. And alone had entered his home by key, without a welcome or greeting at the door.

Tonight, however, for the first time, he did not need his key. But he didn't know it, and the key was in his hand as he walked slowly up the path from the garage.

He was a tall, rangy man in his early forties. His hair was scattered with gray but still thick. Though he walked with a tired step, his eyes were the seeking, eager eyes of youth, and his glance quick and restless. Still some distance from the front door he stopped.

The door was not shut. A ray of evening sunlight pierced through into the shadowy vestibule.

Something must have happened to Ruth! The doctor must be here. He ran up to the door and inside. He heard music. Impossible . . . but from the living room came the rich, pulsing melody of a waltz. Thank heaven Ruth was all right. But who was playing the phonograph? And why was the kitchen dark? Susannah should be in there, preparing supper.

He dropped his hat and brief case on the table, took the few steps necessary to

reach the living room. On the threshold he stopped in disbelief.

A girl, dark-haired and slim, was dancing dreamily, whirling in lazy circles about the furniture. She was beautiful, with eyes half-shut, arms held out, caressing, embracing the empty space through which she swayed.

For an uncomprehending minute he watched her. Then he strode to the phonograph and shut it off.

Silence shook her from the dream. Her arms fell, and she turned in annoyance. Something about her features was familiar, but he didn't waste time wondering. He said, "I'm George Parker. This is my house. Mind telling me who you are?"

"Not at all, George." She sank into an armchair. "I'm Alice, your sister-in-law. Sorry to be the bearer of bad tidings but I've come to stay. Ruth wrote and said she needed me."

Maybe to an outsider the words might sound sensible, but to him they were a jumble of nonsense.

"Ruth's sister? But she didn't say anything about your coming." Ruth hadn't said a word, not even that morning. He couldn't remember the last time she had

spoken of Alice. "I didn't even realize you two corresponded."

Once years before, Ruth had shown him her sister's picture and mentioned that she lived out West—Oregon or Washington. There was no doubt this was the girl in the picture. She was younger and, of course, prettier than Ruth. Her eyes were wide, with a disturbing depth, and her lips had a sulky fullness. She stood taller than Ruth and held her head differently, almost defiantly.

"I came a few days early," said Alice. "Maybe Ruth meant to tell you tomorrow. Who knows why she was mysterious about it? Anyway she sent me the fare, and here I am, toothbrush and all."

She took a cigarette from the box on the table. He leaned across to light it for her.

"Although I must admit," she continued, "it's not what I expected. The house is much smaller and the furniture so depressing. It has all the sparkle of a funeral parlor." She sighed, exhaling a delicate spiral of smoke. "I should have remembered how uninspired Ruth's taste always was."

He stared at her. He

couldn't believe she had just insulted his home and his wife. And yet she had, with a casual assurance and insolence that left him wordless.

"Ruth's waiting," she said. "Hadn't you better run up and see her?"

He didn't trust himself to answer. With one darting look of disapproval he left the room. Going up the stairs he could hear music begin again below.

His wife raised herself from the pillows on the chaise as he came in.

He bent down to kiss her pale cheek. "Hello, darling. How was it today? You look fine and rested," he lied.

She clutched his hand and asked with nervous hesitancy, "Did you meet Alice? Did you like her? I know you will. Did you get a chance to talk?"

"Yes, dear, I met her. It was a bit of a surprise, seeing her without warning, but she introduced herself. I guess it's what you want, Ruth, but do you think it will work out?"

"Of course, darling! It will be perfect." Her enthusiasm was pathetically child-like. "She's wonderful, so full of life, and she'll be such company for me during the day.

I told Susannah just to come in the morning and stay till three. Alice will cook supper. Anything she needs she can order by phone. She doesn't need the car."

Ruth chattered on, but in a short while her animation faded, and weariness settled across her drawn features. "Forgive me, darling, but I guess the excitement has tired me. I think I'll rest a bit."

He helped her from the chaise to her bed and adjusted the pillows, as he'd done every night for four years.

She raised a thin hand and patted his arm. "I'm glad you're home, dear."

Every night she patted his arm just that way and said those same words. They were his signal to leave.

Downstairs the kitchen was still dark. Undoubtedly Alice was waiting to see if he wanted his dinner scrambled or sunny-side-up. He took a steadying breath and joined her in the parlor. Although the phonograph played a slow, whimpering blues, Alice was not dancing. She sat on the window bench, combing her hair.

"Dinner's been ready for hours," she said, smoothing back the shimmering mass of hair. "We're eating on the back porch. A cold supper.

The Sauterne is on the tray in the pantry if you'll take it out."

He said, "We don't usually take wine with our meals."

"No? Well, I do." She rose and switched off the phonograph. "Quite a record collection you've got there. Too bad Rudy Vallee isn't a big favorite of mine."

She crossed the room, her green silk dress flaring about her knees. With its provocatively fitted lines, the dress was obviously designed for something more exciting than supper at Roseberry Lane. George smiled to himself as he followed her down the hall. Poor Alice, he thought. She didn't know that despite her more than adequate performance and costumes, the theater was empty.

On the porch she'd set up a table with their best china and crystal. A silver bowl was filled with garden flowers. All the scene lacked was candles and a gypsy fiddler.

Alice brought out fried chicken, tossed salad and rolls. "Aren't you going to pour the wine?" she asked, seating herself.

He filled her glass and his own. As he was about to drink, he noticed her questioning half-smile.

"It's fine. Very nice," he said. "But I should explain we don't use this crystal and china everyday. Only on special occasions."

She tore a roll apart and buttered it. "I saw some Woolworth crockery on the shelves, but I had no idea you used it."

"We use it," he said coldly. "Since you're a visitor, you won't mind my acquainting you with our habits. That way it'll be easier for us all."

He went on to explain what hour he liked his breakfast in the morning, when he left the house, and so on. He was patient but her manner was nearly impossible. She interrupted constantly, introducing pointless humor that upset his train of thought. Also, she ate voraciously. He had never seen anyone clean a plate so fast. Or perhaps through the years he had become over-used to Ruth's dainty dawdling over food.

Alice began to peel an orange. "I'll need some money," she said, without preamble. "For clothes. I didn't tell Ruth, but I'm pretty stony. A trunk of mine is coming Railway Express but the clothes in it are about ready for a rummage sale."

He took a minute to think this out. Then he said, "You

won't need anything elaborate here. We dress simply, and there are no neighborhood parties or dances, if that's what you're expecting."

She laughed good-naturedly. "Not for parties, George. Just for me. I've only got this one dress. Took my last cent, but I know how important first impressions are."

And she had certainly made hers! He emphasized again how quiet life at Roseberry Lane was, and then reluctantly agreed to give her some money to buy "a few sensible cottons."

"You're an angel," she purred, settling back in her chair. "And Susannah said you were such a cheap skate."

Cheap skate! What was left of his patience was swept away in a gust of rage. Disjointedly he thought, "This vulgar . . . outrageous creature . . . is it possible . . . she has discussed me with the cleaning woman?" His anger was so great he could only sputter incoherently.

"Calm down, George," Alice chuckled in enjoyment. "She didn't really say it . . . just sort of conveyed the idea."

"In the future," he managed at last, "I'd appreciate it if you let Susannah do her work without gossiping. While you are in my house, as

my guest, kindly leave her alone."

"You're cute, George, when you give off sparks. But I get the message." She began to clear the table. "Don't bother the help. Just pussyfoot around in the daytime. I can see life is going to be real cheery."

He lit a cigarette and left the porch without answering. He didn't know where he was going, but he had to get away from her. He found himself opening the front door and glaring out at the summer night. Good idea. He'd take a walk and cool off.

"She won't stay," he told himself hopefully as he started down the steps. She had already criticized the house and everything in it. Without the car she'd be isolated. A few remarks to his commuting neighbors about Ruth's need for rest would keep visitors away. The community had never, at its best, roared with activity, and now at the summer's height, with families away at the shore, Roseberry Lane had dozed off into a soundless, rhythmic sleep.

But Alice did not languish in boredom on Roseberry Lane. She traveled by bus to White Plains every other day for shopping. The first day

she brought back new clothes. The third day armfuls of records. The fifth day an expensive phonograph was delivered to the house.

"That's right. I bought it with my own money," said Alice when George questioned her. "I got a check by mail the other day."

He was unconvinced. "I didn't see any mail for you."

"Sorry, George, but a letter came for me on the two o'clock delivery yesterday." She threw him a smile of pure malice. "What's the trouble? Don't you think I have any friends?"

He was sure she had, but he didn't want to distress himself by visualizing them. So he replied in a manner that would soon become habitual: he shrugged his shoulders and was silent.

On non-shopping days Alice amused herself by rearranging the furniture. George had just become accustomed to the new arrangements when the following week all familiar lamps, chairs and tables were exiled to the cellar, and strange-looking modern odd pieces were put in their place.

Surveying the living room, George felt like a stranger in his own home. He sought out Alice in the kitchen. "What are you trying to do?" he

cried. "That furniture . . . it's ugly and hideous! Are you deliberately trying to make my home as ugly as possible? And who paid for those monstrosities? Am I supposed to believe you got another mysterious check in the mail?"

"That's right," said Alice. "I paid for it. I replaced that cheery Civil War furniture with something half-way decent that doesn't give me the willies just to look at. Even a blind man could see the improvement, but you can't, of course. Don't bother thanking me for the trouble or the money. Ruthie already did. I told her all about it, and she was thrilled. She thinks it's marvelous, so don't go running upstairs to cry on her shoulder."

So it went on. There was to be no serenity of existence while Alice remained. To get away from the sound of her nightly dance-music sessions in the living room, George retreated every evening after supper to his room or to the outdoors.

He received no sympathy from Ruth who, in her mild way, stubbornly rejected any criticism of her sister. He felt he could not force the issue or give her an ultimatum. Lately Ruth's illness seemed

to take all her emotions and to turn her thoughts inward. She had grown more listless and her manner less responsive.

Eventually George decided to telephone Dr. Morell, who paid Ruth a brief house call every week. Morell assured him that Ruth was coming along fine.

"But how about yourself?" said Morell. "Ruth tells me you've been pretty edgy and nervous. Don't think you're driving yourself too hard in this heat, do you? Might be a good idea if you took a few days off from the office."

George mumbled something, a vague promise, and hung up. He'd take some time off all right, but not while Alice was his house guest.

He went out to the back porch for a cigarette and some silence. He had barely settled down when Alice slammed open the door and clattered a chair over the tiles. She sat down near him, with a rustle of her skirt, but said nothing. A faint perfume reached him.

Finally he cleared his throat and asked, "Dancing over for the night?"

"Maybe." She crossed her legs. "The garden is lovely at night."

He grunted agreement.

"I like the country. The quiet is so loud and steady, it almost throbs, she said. "At night I can feel it throbbing, beating in my blood. Can you feel it flowing through you, like wine?"

He tossed away his cigarette and stood up. She waited till he was at the door before she rose.

"Why are you afraid of me, George?" she said, coming up to him. She put her hand lightly on his arm.

He stared into her shadowy gray eyes and saw the challenge in them. "You don't scare me, Alice," he said.

Her arms went around his neck, and she stood waiting. Here was his chance to fling her aside, to reject her in the only way a woman like Alice could understand.

He put his hands on her shoulders, and then instinctively, as though seized by a strength beyond himself, his grip tightened and he pulled her roughly to him. He covered her red, defiant lips with his own.

As he kissed her, he knew that here, warm and alive in his embrace, was the only woman in the world he could truly want. He wanted her, more than he had ever needed any woman.

He raised his head, and she put her cheek against his, her eyes closed. For a moment they stood motionless together. Then he said, "Don't leave me, Alice."

She stirred in his arms. "No, darling. I never will."

He kissed her again, her forehead, her cheeks, her sweet scented hair.

The days that followed were like the early days of an illness. Consecutive hours brought conflicting emotions, so that the days had a blurred, feverish quality. George's happiness at times was almost unbearable. The fragments of joy, however, were torturingly brief and complete in themselves. They cast no shadow and left him wretched with shame.

But his need for Alice was stronger than his self-loathing. In guilty atonement, he spent more time than usual with Ruth. He brought her new books and candy. Ruth, unlike her sister, was not blossoming. Whenever he came in, her hands were empty and her eyes vacantly tired. She no longer cared about her reading or the radio. She stayed more in bed, going to the chaise only in the afternoons.

Why wasn't she the com-

plaining, querulous type of invalid, so that he could find some shred of justification for his behavior? Her nature had always been gentle, and illness had not changed it. She demanded less of him than Alice, much less.

His own inner anguish was an odd contrast to the, untroubled good spirits of Alice. Soul-searching bothered her far less than her wardrobe. Her long-awaited trunk had arrived and brought with it the smartest clothes he had ever seen. He realized belatedly that what he had always called Ruth's "conservative taste" was nothing more than dowdiness. Alice knew instinctively that women should dress for but one purpose: to make themselves more desirable in men's eyes.

She also displayed some costume jewelry that had come in the trunk. He was reminded of Ruth's small collection of jewelry, pieces he had given her through the years of their marriage. Of course, none of the bracelets or brooches he had bought her had been extravagantly showy.

The stones were small but they were the best. And what had happened to them? Ruth had put them away in locked darkness on bits of

cotton. She didn't believe in wearing expensive jewelry.

He thought of his last gift to Ruth: a pair of pearl and diamond earrings that had never seen light nor been worn with beauty. Why not give them to Alice, just for a little while?

He had only to go to Ruth's room and take the earrings from her jewel box. He knew where the key was. His watch read eleven-thirty. Ruth would be long asleep.

Alice was at her dressing table painting her nails. He bent to kiss her hair. "Ruth has a pair of diamond earrings that would look beautiful with your blue dress. How'd you like to borrow them?"

Alice shook her head. "Ruth's earrings? Don't bother, darling. I know the ones you mean. She showed me all her jewelry one day, and I didn't want to hurt her feelings. But between you and me, some of those stones you couldn't see with a microscope." She smiled, looking up at him. "I guess Ruthie's easy to please, but I'm fussy. I prefer diamonds you can see with the naked eye."

He stared uncomprehendingly as she laughed. Could she be serious? Were her

casual knife-thrusts meant to draw blood? No, she must have misunderstood him somehow.

Her laughter simmered down. "Oh, George," she said, "you're such a big sport. You quite overwhelm me at times. If I had said all right, would you have tiptoed across the hall and stolen those earrings for me?"

So she hadn't misunderstood him. She took his kindness and returned insult. It amused her to shock and pain him. She hated him, and he had never guessed it. All along she had been mocking him, and now she didn't even care if he knew it. He must have been insane to have sacrificed his conscience for her.

He bent his head, covering his eyes from the sight of her. "Get out," he said. The words were low, like a whispered curse.

"Poor George, the truth hurts, doesn't it?" she said. "The big sport was going to steal jewelry from a dying woman!" She laughed again.

"Get out," he said. "I've let you stay here, but now I'm through." He dropped his hands. "Get out of this house."

"Well, now he's become an actor," she said, without mov-

ing. "You have so many facets, George!"

"Stop it," he said in a low voice. "Stop it, or I'll kill you. I'm warning you."

"You don't like me anymore, George?" she asked, "because I tell the truth? You prefer hypocrisy and lies, don't you, darling? How upset Ruthie would be if she knew the language of love was dishonesty. She has such illusions." She began to unfasten the back of her dress. "It's after midnight. I'm tired."

He hated her and her smug confidence. She was threatening to tell Ruth. She didn't care if the shock killed Ruth. No, she would ruin Ruth's life and his to amuse herself. She thought she could lie down to sleep and arise tomorrow to continue her evil. She thought he was a fool, a clown. She was right. He hated himself as much as he hated her. He was a poor, stupid, greedy clown, but he wouldn't let her destroy his wife and himself.

He took a step toward her, and she backed away, her smile fading. She stumbled and fell against the bed. Now was his chance. He gripped her throat, and saw that her eyes had become almost glassy with fear. His fingers tight-

ened, closer, cutting off her breath. This was the way, the only way. He had to kill her. It was the price for his self-respect, the price for Ruth. He was a clown, but Alice had forgotten he was also a man.

She struggled, clawing up at him, weakly, futilely, while his fingers held their grip.

So now tomorrow had come. Ruth and he were alive to see it and enjoy it. Alice could threaten no more.

A sound disturbed him. Was it a door shutting? Had Susannah come already? His watch had stopped. He must do something, send Susannah away until he could get rid of Alice's body.

He went into the hall and listened at the head of the stairs. There was no sound. Reassured, he turned towards Alice's room. He took a breath and forced himself to turn the doorknob. He stepped into the room.

The bed was empty. The room was clean, tidy, and empty.

There was not a single, personal article anywhere. He went to the closet. Except for some hangers, it was bare.

She had gone! Somehow in the night she had run away. He hadn't killed her. She was still alive. The threat of her

was more dangerous than ever.

He heard the sound again. She must be downstairs; maybe she was telephoning the police or maybe she was pouring her story out to Susannah.

He ran out into the hall, down the stairs. The sound had come from the rear. He tore open the kitchen door, and there was Susannah. She was just removing a faded straw hat. Her black handbag, a large carry-all, lay on its side on the kitchen table.

"Susannah!" he cried. "Did you see Alice?"

"I beg pardon, sir?"

"Alice. My sister-in-law. She's gone. All her things are gone." Where was she? Had she really run away? "Did you meet her? Maybe you saw her as you came from the bus. Tell me! Why don't you say something?"

"About what, sir? Who are you talking about?"

"Alice!" he practically screamed. "My wife's sister. Why do you ask such idiotic questions when you can see I want help?"

She reddened defensively. "Maybe I could help, Mr. Parker, if you'd stop carrying on like a chicken with its head off. And look at your face, all scratched up and marked. If I

didn't know you so long, I'd say you'd been in a fight. Now calm down and tell me. Who's Alice? Who's this person you are looking for?"

He forced control of himself. Obviously he had frightened Susannah out of the few wits she had. "Alice is the girl who's been living here for a month. You can't tell me you didn't know her. She's the one who bought all this new furniture . . ."

Susannah's face twisted as though she were about to cry. Instead she smiled uncertainly. "But you bought it, sir. I know because the first time I called the store when the lamps and those chairs were delivered. I asked Mrs. P. and she said she didn't know nothing about them. So I called the store to say there was a mistake. But they checked and said you'd come in the day before and paid cash for them."

He felt he was in a nightmare of quicksand. Instead of getting free his struggles were dragging him deeper into it. "What's the matter with you? Why are you lying?" He seized her arm. "You must remember Alice and the time you told her I was such a cheap skate. Do cheap skates go out and buy furniture they don't need?"

"Let go my arm, Mr. Parker! I never said no such thing about you, and I don't know no Alice, leastways not in this house. I got no cause to lie to you."

Even Susannah, the solid, the reliable, was crumbling before his eyes. Or was she just pretending to? Maybe she knew something. Of course! She was lying to confuse him. There was some good reason behind her seeming stupidity. Maybe Alice had planned a trap for him and was using Susannah.

"In other words, you don't know anything about the girl who used our guest room for the past month?"

"Nobody's been in the guest room, Mr. Parker. I ought to know. I swept in there day before last."

"I know what you're doing," he cried. "She's paid you to tell these lies, and the two of you are trying to trap me. Don't trust her, Susannah. Don't believe her. She's evil. When she doesn't need you any more, she'll destroy you like she tried to destroy me. I know it!"

A door slammed as he caught his sobbing breath. He was alone. Susannah had run away. She'd seen she had failed. No, he hadn't fallen for

that look of innocence on her flat, stupid face.

Ruth would help him. Ruth would remember her own sister. She wouldn't deny the person who'd looked after her the past month. With new hope rising, he ran back toward the stairs.

Next door, at the Fearons, Susannah asked to use the phone to call Dr. Morell.

"This is Susannah," she said, "the daily woman at the Parkers . . . No, it's not Mrs. Parker. It's her husband . . . No, not sick, but he's acting strange . . . I'm not imagining! He was screaming about some woman I never heard of. Said she was living in the house, and you know as well as me, there's only that poor, sick Missus of his . . . No, not really sudden. He's been acting different for almost a month. You can tell just by looking at him that something's wrong. He's got real thin. I always leave him something cold in the fridge for supper, but lately he hardly ever eats it. And he's been drinking. That's the truth. He started with wine and now it's something stronger. I seen the bottles in the morning with my own eyes. Is that imagining? Oh, yes, just now as I was running out, he shouted at me that this Alice

woman was going to kill me! If you ask me, he's lived too long with sickness and stays too much in that gloomy house . . . All right, I'll wait for you outside. I'm scared to go back in."

She hung up the receiver and had to sit down for a minute. Her legs just gave way beneath her.

George reached Ruth's room and flung back the door. The room was dark, blinds drawn. Ruth was still asleep. How blessed, he thought, to be as remote as she in this upper room, safely distant from the treachery and deceit without.

He approached the bed. "Ruth."

She did not stir. Above the sheet one arm lay, drooping down gracefully, its fingers pointing to the floor. Then he saw the bedlamp.

It was smashed and broken on the carpet, its fragments cast wide.

He stood where he was. He felt frozen, caught on the edge of time. His heart seemed to have stopped, and he felt he could not move. But he *must* go nearer.

Her face was half-hidden by the pillows. Could he bring himself to touch her? "Ruth," he heard himself whisper in a frightened manner.

He put out a trembling hand and raised her arm. It was cold and stiff. Her nails were broken, torn. There was dried blood streaking across them.

Convulsively he dropped her arm, and in a quick, unthinking reflex seized the nearest pillow, jerking it away from her face. Her head fell back, revealed, and he saw her. Ruth! He had strangled Ruth!

With a scream neither of them heard, he fell to the foot of the bed. The pain inside his head seemed to be ripping away at his reason. Had he lost his mind? Was he a mad man? He felt pain blaze up like a light, and by its shattering glare truth flickered for a moment and reached him.

There was no Alice, nowhere, not ever, not for him. There was no Alice, except in the world of his despair and loneliness. There was only Ruth, the dying, the helpless, and he had killed her.

THE END

PSYCHOANALYSIS

BY

TELEPATHY

By ELLERY LANIER

To many people, the psychiatrist's couch symbolizes mental betterment. But our knowledge of the human mind may be inadequate in many cases, and hence the results of mental treatment unpredictable. According to Ellery Lanier's findings, there have been times when the patient "paid fees for being cured by treatments the doctor himself should have been taking." For other startling possibilities, read Mr. Lanier's searching article.

IF YOU have ever "done time" on a psychoanalyst's couch—the strange dreams you may have reported may not have come from your own unconscious mind at all. Ever since Dr. Freud first hinted that telepathy might be working in the treatment of mentally ill patients, a behind the scenes battle has been raging between rival factions of psychoanalysts. Telepathy has been a political hot potato in the profession and few doctors dare to commit themselves openly to either side for fear of being labeled crackpots.

This is not an ordinary disagreement among doctors. If telepathy is officially recognized, it will mean that a lot of people will have been treated for other people's illnesses;

almost like being convicted for and serving a sentence for another man's crime!

Some doctors claim that patients receive telepathic dream images from the doctors other patients which they then believe to be their own. These same doctors believe that occasionally their patients have suffered from the doctor's own personal problems that they received telepathically; and then they paid fees for being cured by treatments that the doctor himself should have been taking.

This crazy mixed up situation is not a wild dream of science fiction. It is being seriously studied by top-notch men like Dr. George Devereux of the Menninger School of Psychiatry. It is interesting that Dr. Devereux does not

deny that it was the appeal of the weird and uncanny that drew him to study telepathy. At the same time he insists that the analyst's job is to cure his patient and not to prove or disprove thought transference.

The desire for telepathic and also telekinetic power (moving distant things by will power), can be traced back to our infancy; and also to the infancy of the human race. As infants we had fantasies of controlling everything around us; this was done by imaginary telepathy. When we grow up we still want to control everything around us but we find the going tough.

This deeply felt desire explains the fascination that telepathy and its possible reality holds for us. Occultists and spiritualists have added to our existing senses an unknown underlying physical force or sixth sense, called the "Od": in contrast to the Ego, Id, and Super-Ego of the Analysts. Proof of the "Od" sense would force the medical profession into a complete revision of dream theory.

In opposition to the occultists, the psychoanalysts try to turn telepathic images back

into our own unconscious to trace their supposed real origins. Regardless of the doctor's attitudes, scientific dream analysis provides perfect experimental conditions in which to observe telepathy; and this is what has been troubling so many of the doctors.

An interesting analogy is provided by the way in which astronomers derided the claims of the scientist Jansky when he first announced that disturbing radio static came from the stars. Today when Radio-Astronomy is in the lead, the astronomers who "proved" that radio signals could not possibly come across the space between stars can only learn to be less dogmatic; and the same promises to happen in telepathy.

Freud explained telepathy as the "reception of a mental process by one person from another by means other than sensory perception." Mental transference according to Freud, came about most easily, when an idea is just about to come up out of the unconscious mind, even if we are asleep.

Recent records of respected psychoanalysts are loaded with strong evidence for the sensation of mind reading that both patients and doc-

tors report. The following anecdotes are authentic: Dr. H. D. was planning to celebrate her eighth wedding anniversary. She pushed her plans out of her conscious mind while she spent the day analyzing her patient's dreams. During her last patient's hour, the doctor's mind kept wandering to plans about her wedding celebration. The next day she was expecting her patient to complain about her inattentiveness during the session. Instead, to her utter surprise, the patient brought the following dream:

She was with a family celebrating an eighth wedding anniversary. The dream contained embarrassing details of the doctor's personal life.

There was no way in which the patient could have obtained this information according to Dr. H. D.

Dr. F. H.'s experience: After a period of very difficult work—when she felt that her tenseness was going to make work difficult, she daydreamed about going away for a two-week vacation near the sea. When her first patient entered the office from the waiting room, the doctor stopped her daydreaming. The patient's opening remarks

were: that while he was sitting in the waiting room he was worrying what would happen to him if the doctor went away for two weeks.

This process, called counter-transference also happens without telepathy, but it is Dr. F. H.'s idea that the doctor must do a continuous self-analysis with each new patient to avoid misinterpreting the doctor's problems as the patient's!

Dr. E. H.'s experience: The doctor was worrying about a letter that had not been delivered properly when out of any connections his patient asked him if he had just mentioned a letter. Dr. E. H. says that he was seized with feelings of guilt, because his worry about the letter had taken his mind from following the dream the patient was describing. He felt as though he were cheating and had been caught red-handed in the act. The patient himself was amazed at the question, since he had never asked that type of question before and could not account for it.

Dr. J. E.'s experience: He had spent a day trying to convince his wife that they ought to spend a week end in Atlantic City. The following day a patient told him that she had dreamed of seeing him on the

boardwalk at Atlantic City. Dr. J. E. is so convinced of telepathy that he believes in using it as a means of understanding the patient. He feels that it provides an instrument for probing into the patient's unconscious life and bringing out material that would take months of analysis to bring out, forcing the patient to face feelings that he would normally have suppressed.

This is a matter of opinion. Dr. J. E. claims that the most surprising experience has been the reaction of patients to this kind of explanation. He claims they were not disturbed, but seemed to accept telepathy as a normal everyday experience. He says it produced in his patients the so-called evidence of a correct and useful dream interpretation—: laughter, delighted astonishment, and successful treatment.

On days when the doctor had reasons for feeling anxiety or conflict, everything went wrong. There was so much active telepathy that all the treatment material was pushed out of the patient's mind. Other complications come up when several different patients start sharing the same dreams. One patient dreamed a fulfillment of a repressed wish of another patient.

Dr. G. P.'s experience: She was busy worrying about not having enough silverware to serve guests she had invited for a following evening. Next day a patient reported this dream; she was serving dinner and when the guests arrived she found she didn't have enough silverware and she was very embarrassed. When the actual dinner took place that evening, one of the guests displayed a toy puppet, which annoyed the doctor. Next day another patient reported a dream in which he was acting like a silly puppet.

Doctors suspected the existence of telepathy long ago. Way back in 1884, the psychiatrist Pierre Janet was invited to witness experiments in hypnosis at a sitance. Leonie, a French peasant woman, was being hypnotized by a Dr. Gilbert at a distance great enough to make any physical contact impossible. All Dr. Gilbert had to do was to will the kind of hypnotic action desired and the woman would follow through.

Dr. Janet himself found he could do the same thing; with witnesses and under well controlled conditions. Instead of continuing the study, Dr. Janet switched to the study of hysterical patients, missing a

wonderful opportunity for proving telepathy once and for all.

Dr. Stekel, another firm believer in telepathy said that reception was easier during sleep, since then disturbances from the outer world are at their lowest. He also claimed that women in love become aware of the moment their lovers are betraying them; even to the extent of feeling pain.

Dr. Freud felt that most of the stories of fortune tellers were really telepathic messages received from the client and then served up in an interesting manner; for a fee. He recorded many cases in which predictions of fortune tellers were proven to be secret wishes of the client.

Freud's idea was that telepathic dreams were just as distorted as ordinary dreams and could be discovered by psychoanalysis. He even had one case in which the patient was suffering from telepathically received troubles in the private life of Dr. Freud!

One explanation of telepathy is that sensitivities that once were active have been lost through civilization and the development of waking intelligence—along with the perfection of the senses in general.

Our most ancient ancestors, the one — animals, were able to react to all kinds of vibrations and radiations directly without the use of eyes, ears, nose, etc. Through the course of evolution, these simple creatures changed from blobs of jelly into something with a head and a tail. Then things really started changing. The stimulations that hit the front of this new creature with a head and tail, were more important than those which hit its rear end. The front had to take in food and be aggressive, while the rear end was the most passive part. Eyes, ears, nose, and touch organs developed at the front end as this process continued in its evaluation.

Along with these organs were developed nerves to interpret the information gathered by the senses and to produce the right kind of reactions to what was being reported.

The old stimulations were no longer reacted to as of old; they were mostly ignored. Keeping the old extra-sensory perception would have interfered with the development of life leading to man. Speech with all its complications would have been unnecessary if human beings could have

communicated directly by telepathy.

The naked erotic and aggressive impulses that telepathy transmitted had to be repressed if men were to live together as civilized beings. But even though the telepathic power was pushed into the background, it was never really eliminated. It will pop up at the least expected moments.

While watching the TV program "What's My Line" the author of this article had an unaccounted-for impulse. The group of panelists tried to guess the occupation of a huge gruff looking man who looked like an old-fashioned truck driver. The author automatically started to say "ballet dancer" and stopped midway thinking it too ridiculous. A moment later the words "ballet dancer" flashed on the screen—it just didn't make sense. The words just seemed to come out of the air.

A Dr. Ehrenwald has a theory that telepathy may be partly responsible for the intense suffering of paranoid psychotics. He feels that they may not be able to tell the difference between dreams; the real waking world around them—or the various destructive images that they may be

receiving telepathically. Their delusions of persecution may actually have a basis in telepathy. Certain destructive seizure cases may be a result of the mind trying to shut out a telepathic attack of anxiety by going into an abnormal condition.

A real surprise was had by the author of this article in one telepathic experiment. The receiver of his transmitted telepathic images wrote out descriptions of the messages. In the sending it was difficult to hold a clean-cut image in the mind. The thought kept changing as it was being sent. The receiver put down a clear description not only of the transmitted images—but of the changes they went through while being transmitted.

One image sent was a crown; in the sending it changed from a circle of flames to a ball to a crown. The receiver picked up each change correctly! Altogether six different transmissions were tried and each came through successfully. But then the most frustrating thing followed. Future attempts to repeat the experiment all failed.

There is an almost hypnotic fascination in telepathy and the other occult phenomena.

Dr. George Devereux describes this lure as a great temptation to the psychoanalyst; it can easily lead him astray from his purpose—which is to cure the patient. Its connection with the basic underlying world of the unconscious in its purest form gives it a tremendous appeal.

Long hidden powerful impulses from infancy are dredged up. It reminds us of the desires for magical power we had as children, but which we finally gave up with sadness.

Most people go through life hoping someday to somehow recapture the miraculous magical attitudes they had in childhood. It is very tough to finally accept the rough and ready world of adulthood.

This unconscious dream of all people is almost an occupational hazard for the psychoanalyst. His patients are continuously trying to give him a belief in his own mastery of everything as part of their reaction under treatment. Since no one is perfect, this lure of magical power is very powerful, especially to the unconscious of the doctor.

The simplest defense against this temptation is to pretend it just doesn't exist. In questioning many doctors about telepathy, the author

was frequently asked in turn—"What are you talking about?"

Ancient magic, hidden in the doctor's own unconscious had been flipped over into skepticism—which in itself is just another kind of magical belief, (in the so-called laws of causality). A true scientist must even be skeptical of his own skepticism—if new discoveries are to be made.

If even once, in one fully controlled experiment, it is proven that precognition for example, has really happened (that someone has really foretold the future); our whole basic science including psychoanalysis will have to be overhauled. Things will not have to be a result of what happened before; there will be only a universal result of what happened before them in time; there will be only a universal present in which things effect each other without future or past connections. Time will be like spatial dimensions; all directed!

The aloofness of many doctors will seem very silly if telepathy is proven scientifically. It would mean that patients are really being exposed to all kinds of repressed memories coming from the

doctor's unconscious. In reverse, messages from the patient would be bombarding the doctor's unconscious forcing him to make decisions that he really is not prepared to make for the patient.

The doctor can easily confuse his own unconscious fantasies with those of his patient. He might then be treating the patient for his own (that is the doctor's own personal), problems. Final proof of telepathy would make the present form of psychoanalysis a mockery.

A new kind of mental treatment would be needed. It would make full use of telepathy, instead of treating it as something queer. Another power related to telepathy is called "Autoscopy"—it enables a person to see into his own body directly. Theories to explain these unusual powers describe the way bundles of nerves criss-cross at certain points in the body. One idea is that this criss-crossing

of nerves serves to eliminate disturbing nerve currents, almost the way a wave shield protects a radio tube.

The sending of nerve impulses through our body is called induction, and one theory of telepathy implies an induction process taking place between the unconscious minds of two separate persons.

The speed with which new information is gathered into a field of knowledge nowadays is always greater than the speed with which this new information can be explained and joined to the older knowledge. This leaves clusters of unexplained facts—requiring basic changes in accepted theories for their final acceptance.

It is these remaining dribbles of unaccounted-for information that seem to point to the next directions of exploration. Telepathy, on all counts, is the next direction for the science of psychoanalysis.

THE END



Pfc. Jason Carr had a way with the women; a technique that no female could possibly resist. Naturally, every man in the world wanted to learn—

Jason's Secret

By ROG PHILLIPS

ILLUSTRATOR SUMMERS

HE CAME to an absurd, flustered attention, saluted me, and blurted, "I would like a three day pass to get married SIR!" Which was very interesting, since there were only male Earthlings on Eridania, so far.

He was Pfc Jason Carr, about five - feet - ten, 160 pounds mass, blond, blue eyes, red-faced and apparently not breathing at the moment while he waited for my reaction. One of the five hundred arrivals on the Starship *Newyorker* five days ago.

Me, I'm Master Sergeant Tom Groh. Six-feet-two, 220 pounds mass, steel gray eyes, I like to think, though they're classified as pale, and iron-gray hair at thirty-five, due to a vitamin F deficiency, they tell me. Pfc Carr was twenty-three and looked nineteen.

I leered at him and said, "Congratulations, but army has some very unfair unwritten laws, one of them being

that the men can't marry each other. They can live in sin if they aren't caught at it, but as for getting actually married—"

I never saw anyone get dead white then brick red three times in three seconds, but Pfc Jason Carr managed it, then interrupted me. "No, no, sir. You misunderstand. She's one of the, er, the natives."

"Does *she* know about this?" I asked, a trifle incredulously.

"Yes, sir," Carr said, the color of his face stopping on the white.

"And you aren't in the hospital with a broken leg or something?" I said. "I don't believe you."

"She loves me, sir," Carr said. "I love her. We love each other. We're going to be—"

"I know," I nodded. "Married. At ease, Carr. I want to tell you something."

"Yes, sir!" he said, coming even more to attention, if possible.

"*AT EASE!*" I barked, and when it got through to him and he went into a limp form of parade rest I went on in a quieter voice. "Look, son, you're new here, and just looking at the surface of things, so far. This is a nice planet, quite a bit like the Earth. Nine-tenths of a G, nice tangy air, blue sky, white clouds in it, two moons instead of one and both of them real nice, green meadows, nice little rivers, big oceans, lots of land, a few more mountains than on Earth and some of them a lot higher . . ."

"Yes, sir," Carr said quietly.

"Even *people!*" I said, spreading my arms. "Lots of people. White, brown, red, yellow, black. Most of them look more like Earthlings than we do. How long have we had a foothold on this planet of Eridania? Since 2180 isn't it? That's almost fifty years. *And in all that time there hasn't been one intermarriage.* Do you think there might be a reason for that?"

"No, sir," Carr said. "That is, yes, sir, but . . ."

"But what?" I asked.

"*We are in love,*" Pfc Jason Carr said.

"All right," I said. I looked up into the blue sky and threw my hands up in surrender. "All right! Come with me and I'll get you a three-day pass—and put the hospital staff on a round-the-clock alert. You'll need them."

They brought him back to the compound just before sunset. It wasn't as bad as I had expected. Compound fracture of the left leg, two ribs, fever of a hundred and five, bad case of shock. Quick surgery to get at the fractures and knit them with plastibone, a young adrenal from the parts bank to replace the one shot to pieces by a neural shortcircuit (the cause of the fever), two quarts of ichorplasma, and a few assorted oral capsules and he would be ambulant by morning. Mental time in the hospital, five minutes. Physical time, perhaps twelve hours unless something new developed.

I had expected cortical shortcircuits and posthypnotic insanity that might take months to track down and straighten out, so maybe the gal really was in love with him. Correction—nine-tenths in love with him. There is a



There were things other than science involved here.

significant difference, as you will see later on.

Anyway, I saw him brought in and properly ticketed into the hospital, and dismissed the matter from my mind. He would have learned his lesson, undoubtedly, and from now on he would tend to business, or I didn't know Pfc Jason Carr. As it turned out, I didn't know him. How could I have?

His three-day pass automatically rescinded when he was brought back, he was two hours late for field drill the next morning, but I let it pass. After all, he had been through a lot. I was even patient with him when he forgot which was left and which was right. He wasn't the only one. Nowadays they draft you on Wednesday, ship you on a starship on Friday, and some master sergeant fifteen or twenty lightyears from Earth gets you two weeks later, so what can be expected?

I noticed though that there was a sort of grim line to his lips as he went through drill. Maybe he was mad. Maybe his pride had taken a jolt. So what? He had asked for it and got it.

He stayed away from me, for which I was thankful. Nothing I hate worse than a Pfc with a yen to unburden

his soul. He stayed away from me for a week, and I had forgotten the whole incident. Then I saw him coming, and I thought, "Oh, no!"

As before, he came to an absurd, flustered attention, saluted, and blurted, "I would like a three-day pass to get married SIR!"

I groaned and said, "Look, pal, the sign of a good soldier is when he knows he's licked. Be a good soldier and go play pinochle with the boys and forget it."

"No, sir," he said, his face pale as death. "I'm not licked. I'm going to marry her or die in the attempt."

"Look, son," I said in a fatherly tone. "This is a democratic army if there ever was one, and I'll play along with you if you insist, but there are several veteran's hospitals back on Earth filled with guys that didn't know when to quit. Brain damage can't be cured with a knife and powders like everything else can. Quit while you still have some of your marbles, it says here."

"There are some things more important than having all your marbles," Carr said with determination.

Which was a truth I had no argument against. I changed

the subject. "What happened?" I asked.

"Nothing!" he said, turning beet red.

I looked up into the blue sky with a now-I-ask-you gesture. "Nothing!" I mimicked him. "Compound fractures, a shot adrenal, and extreme shock are nothing?"

"Well, nobody laid a hand on me, if that's what you mean," he said sullenly.

"I know that," I said. "What I'm thinking is that you didn't lay a hand on anyone either. Your bride-to-be, for instance?"

He didn't answer, so I cocked my head to one side like I was doing some serious figuring.

"Let—me—see . . ." I said musingly. "The marriage would get the native treatment instead of Earth procedure. The public intention-to-wed supper, followed by the pre-wedding night with the girl's brothers and/or male cousins guarding the door. Then, first thing in the morning the doctor arrives to examine the girl. If she's still a virgin the guy gets the bum's rush, and if not, the brothers and cousins make sure he doesn't get away before the ceremony. But, judging from the time they brought you in

on a stretcher you'd had maybe half an hour or less alone with your gal . . ."

"That's not so!" he said, his face a glowing red. "I fell down a flight of stairs on the way up to the room."

"You sure you didn't fall off the bed?" I asked.

"No, *SIR!*" he said, drawing to attention, his eyes straight ahead, like pfc's do when they would rather sock their sergeant instead.

I sighed elaborately and said, "Okay, I'll get you your three-day pass—and put the hospital on alert again." I smiled then and thrust out my hand. "Good luck," I said.

He was okay in my books. He had lied like a gentleman about what had happened. But I had read the report, and he *had* been alone with his girl in the pre-marriage suite at one of the plush native hotels before the ambulance was called . . .

After he went out the gate I hurried over to the hospital. I wanted to watch the *trace* myself this time. They already had it going.

The map screen had the little dot of light on it that showed his position, determined by the two pickup stations five miles apart that automatically pinpointed his

direction while, at the same time, receiving the signal sent out by the little broadcast unit imbedded under his skin on the side under his right arm. The pinpoint of light was moving at a fair clip along one of the surface arterials of the Eridanian city—probably in a taxi.

The signal analyzer screen next to the map screen of course brought only the analyzer output, not the direct signal. The signal from the broadcast unit sent out Pfc Jason Carr's pulse and breathing rates. These fed into the analyzer proper which checked them against the storage tapes of his heart-beat and breathing under a hundred different physical and emotional standardized conditions, and fed the pulse rate, breathing rate, and comparison situations onto the screen.

After watching the screens for a while you begin visualizing what's going on, and you can practically tell what the guy's doing and thinking every minute.

You see the white dot turn off the arterial onto a side street, the breath screen flashes *anticipation*, the heart screen flashes *stagefright*, and you visualize the guy in the taxi looking ahead down the

street, seeing his girl friend's house, wondering if he'll be welcome. Get what I mean?

You see the white dot stop for a minute. The breath screen says *stands up* (everyone has a characteristic breathing pattern during the act of getting up from a relaxed position). The heart screen flashes *excitement*. The white dot moves on, and you know he got out of the taxi, and is going up the walk to the house.

Pretty soon you aren't really seeing the screens. You are seeing what's going on.

And I wasn't the only one. Besides me, there were several doctors and at least fifty army and civilian bigwigs watching, and more coming in all the time.

And if Pfc Carr made it with the girl friend the sub-ether would hypervibe with the news. It had reached the point a long time ago where the thing everybody wanted most was to live long enough to see a baby born of an Earthling and an Eridanian. At least, that was the case in the upper echelon circuits. The masses didn't know about it, except possibly by rumor, because it was *classified*.

Even the Eridanians wanted to see it happen—but not

one hundred percent. Maybe ninety-eight percent. And there's a significant difference. A *significant* difference.

The whole thing goes way back to the beginning. The Eridanians and the Earthlings had separate and independent origins. That has been proven. If you want to know the details get a book. If you just want the general idea I can give it to you. It has to do with converging evolution.

With ordinary evolution you have a single species, and from that species you can get a certain number of possible mutations, and environment dictates whether any of these can survive. After a few thousand years you have several different species, all of which can be traced back to the original stock. That's divergent evolution.

With converging evolution you start with two unrelated species and after a few million years you wind up with two species that look alike. In the extreme case you have two species that are so closely alike that so far as gene pattern is concerned they are just one species.

It isn't as impossible as it seems. To each species there is a finite number of muta-

tions possible, and most of these are canceled by environment, leaving a relative few broad lines of evolution, these lines wandering over the whole picture, branching off this way and that. And sometimes some of these approach the same possibility from separate directions — and reach it.

The Eridanians and the Earthlings did that. They have a Nordic stock, a Neogroid, an Indian, and Mongolian and all the rest, pigmy, midget, giant, normal. Vocal languages, written languages, cultures, civilizations — the works. With one difference.

They are telekinetic.

That is, they can make things happen just by thinking about them. Nothing spectacular or phenomenal. Just little things. No miracles.

They can make a pair of dice hop off the table and land showing a seven, with no one touching the dice physically. They can even make a fair sized rock leap off the ground and shoot at you by itself. But they can't lift a rock by telekinesis that they couldn't lift with their muscles too, and it takes as much energy out of them to do it.

That's okay. Where the trouble comes in is with the control. Did you ever try re-

maining perfectly still, not moving a muscle? Try it. I'll bet within five minutes you develop an itch you simply have to scratch. You'll fight it and fight it and the itch gets worse and worse. Finally you'll scratch it. How many times did you scratch all day yesterday? Not once? Two thousand times? Try to keep track for the next half hour and you'll get what I'm driving at. You'll find that most of the time it's unconscious. You don't know you're doing it. You suddenly become aware you are scratching and remember you're doing it because you itched. But suppose the ash tray next to you slid to a better spot by itself, and you had to stop and think to know that you had moved it by telekinesis. Suppose every time you were irritated at someone you tripped them by telekinesis. It might get so you wouldn't be aware you were irritated until you saw someone trip—and then realized with surprise that you had done it, and then recognized that you were irritated.

Switch it around. You are the one being tripped. If you are telekinetic you soon learn defenses. If you're born telekinetic you grow up that way in a give and take, and hold your own, most of it going on

on the unconscious level, with it sometimes flaring forth like two kids straining against each other in a wrestling bout, each holding his own in the flare of temper.

Two telekinetic kids would be straining in a stalemated telekinetic battle, making rocks jump at each other and making them miss in a complex offense and defense, evenly matched against each other. But a non-telekinetic kid would be no match against even a telekinetic baby. He would be the helpless victim of every conscious and unconscious telekinetic move.

Now. Hold that picture and gently superimpose it on the picture of a non-telekinetic guy trying to get next to a telekinetic gal who ninety percent wants to and ten percent doesn't. Or even one that ninety-eight percent wants to.

Sure it had been tried the other way around, but a non-telekinetic woman is completely helpless against the irresponsible beginnings of telekinesis in an unborn child and one or both died before the baby came—always. Which was why no female Earthlings were permitted on Eridania.

Think of it a while and the

picture will round out. Live with it for fifty years, and you begin to get philosophical about letting the Pfc Jason Carr's of the world have a whack at it in the hope that one of them—just one of them—might stumble onto something.

Me, I had my whack at it when I was a Pfc. She was the most beautiful little red-head you could imagine, my little Nolchi. I still dream about her after twelve years. And she was heartbroken over what she did to me and would never have harmed me for the world, intentionally.

She still loves me, to a certain extent. I got a letter from her a year ago telling me she still loves me. After I finished reading the letter it wadded up and jumped out of my hand, hitting me right in the eye before I could blink or duck. Unconscious resentment on her part at my not having made the grade, the docs tell me. . . .

The little pinpoint of light on the map screen had stayed in one spot for almost an hour, and though the heart and breath screens did a lot of strange things, the analyzer didn't flash the red light and ring the gong to signal real damage.

I pictured Jason Carr sitting in a living room talking to his girl's old man while she was upstairs getting dolled up for another try at the public intention-to-wed dinner. That would take place at one of the better restaurants downtown, of course, with mama and papa and the brothers and male cousins sitting at other tables, leaving them strictly alone except for maybe a sly tipping over of a water glass or something.

It got to be almost seven o'clock. Then the dot started moving again. It moved back to the arterial and on towards the downtown section on the map.

Once, when they were halfway into town, the red light flashed and the alarm gong sounded for one quickly stopped second. The red light went dead. I caught the cause of it. Carr's pulse rate had jumped up to a hundred and fifty-five for three heartbeats.

Maybe he had stolen a kiss.

Anyway, it put everybody on edge. I knew I was sitting on the edge of my seat, and there was a general restlessness through the room.

Every seat was filled now and maybe a hundred men stood around against the walls. And for all I knew they had set up screens else-

where so the whole post could watch.

The point of light finally stopped at a spot, and the name flashed onto the screen. The *Borstag*. I had been there, and could visualize the quiet atmosphere, the ornamental plants that looked like they might be native to Earth until you began to notice the little differences, the subdued music.

The heart and breath screens began giving the information that Carr was drinking, or chewing and swallowing, or talking. All these have characteristic pulse variation and breathing patterns for any individual. Even stretching and yawning can be identified by the analyzer.

Except for that one space of less than two seconds on the way downtown, Jason Carr had undoubtedly had a very pleasant evening—so far.

But I was sitting on the edge of my chair, and so were those around me. It was like waiting for the early rounds of a fight to pass, knowing that the knockout punch could be delivered any time, but probably wouldn't come until at least the fifth or sixth round.

As I waited I began to

think back over the past week. Carr had gone around with a thoughtful look in his eye, like he might be puzzling over something. I began remembering little things about him I hadn't particularly noticed before. He had a stubborn streak in him a mile wide, an I.Q. of 190. His ESP quotient was negative generally, meaning that he was the type known as unlucky—which accounted somewhat for his stubborn streak and dogged insistence.

The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that he hadn't plunged out again in a do-or-die attitude. He had some idea he was working from.

Not that it would do him any good, but it was going to be interesting to watch how far it went.

Visualizing what was going on from what appeared on the analyzer screens, I knew when he finished eating, and that he was completely relaxed over an after-dinner cigarette and cup of moca.

I could visualize him as he ground out his cigarette in the ash tray and stood up. His pulse rate shot up to 107 for fifteen heartbeats, then remained irregular, racing and faltering as his thoughts and

emotions projected forward to what was to come.

The pinpoint of light on the map screen moved very slowly for two blocks. The map expanded off the screen until just a sixteen square block area showed. Now we could see the pattern of progress and deduce that Carr and the girl were window shopping, pausing in front of each display window, moving on to the next.

Finally they turned into the lobby of the hotel. The analyzer screens told when they went up in the elevator. I could visualize them walking down the hall, escorted by a bellboy. Carr's heart was racing along at an uneven 110, his breathing rapid, then stopped altogether, then rapid again.

Then a couple of deep breaths and a slight slowing of the heart. They were alone.

I could visualize them now, alone with their desires and their inner conflicts that opposed the fulfillment of those desires.

Each of us, at every moment, are the sum total of our past. We are at once the adult with an adult desire for a full life, a teen-ager, a child, an infant, and perhaps also the

yet unborn. Not blended into one so much as prisoners together in one body, each defiant of all the others in the fulfillment of our desires. And Pfc Jason Carr was alone in a room with a woman who wanted to be his mate, a terror-stricken child who would rather die than be ravished, a sexless young girl who would fight to remain so, an infant who knew nothing but pleasure and pain, joy and fear, and an embryo governed by the sensations of pressure and temperature, all of whom had a power to hurt, a power to attack from directions where Jason Carr had no eyes, no ears, no arms to protect himself.

The woman would come into his arms unafraid, surrendering, while a spiteful child knifed him without conscience and a terror stricken infant lashed out blindly.

The heart screen showed the pulse rate steady at 82 while the breath screen showed breathing to have stopped. Twenty seconds, thirty, sixty, eighty, with no breathing at all. A kiss. It could be nothing but a kiss. A quick breath, then again no breathing. The pulse rate climbed slowly toward ninety, toward ninety-five. A breathing rate of two-sixty for several seconds,

which had to be laughter. Then the breathing pattern of talking.

Were they exchanging the words of love most precious and unique to lovers? I could only guess, try to visualize what I myself could be doing and thinking.

Jason Carr and his girl were perhaps moments away from attempting the most precious and intimate of all experiences. And outside their room in the hallway of the hotel, waiting in tense silence, were doctors, nurses, surgical equipment, geared to go into instant action the instant the attempt was successfully and violently repulsed as it would inevitably be.

And in the hospital parts bank a spare liver, kidneys, adrenals, and even a spare heart, were being warmed up for any emergency.

In my mind it became my little Nolchi and me in that room, and I was reliving what had happened to me. One moment the heat of living passion about to be fulfilled, the next moment a wave of pure, stark terror. Even now, after all these years, my mind shied away from what had followed. They told me afterwards that when they found me I was dead, and Nolchi was crouch-

ed over me, crying her heart out.

They had plugged me into a heart-lung machine and rushed me to base hospital. Brain deterioration had settled in badly. They had had to keep my head under isolated circulation for two solid weeks, hooked into an ichor tank and a couple of rooms-full of auxiliary gadgets that made possible the slow cleaning out of my brain and restoration of function. Fortunately the only damage to my brain had been simple decomposition brought on by death. No cortical shorting or widespread capillary rupturing.

And with a new heart, liver, restored kidneys plus a third kidney installed for permanent insurance, and assorted gland replacements, I had been a better man physically ever since even though my I.Q. had never returned to its former 140 level, and my P.Q. factor had never steadied. In fact, my I.Q. had never come back above a hundred. Instead, my P.Q. had shot up to compensate, which was why I made a good master sergeant, they tell me.

A murmur of excitement around me brought me back to the present. I had been lost

in my own thoughts for an hour!

The pinpoint of light on the map screen showed Pfc Jason Carr to still be at the hotel. The heart screen showed a steady pulse of 65. The breath screen showed a steady breathing rate of 12.4.

The guy was sound asleep!

And from the excited conversation around me I gathered that he had made the grade.

But how?

Speculations on that question dominated the conversation around me. No one knew. No one had any idea.

Neither did I, but now I was convinced that Jason Carr had gone into his pre-wedding night with a definite plan of action, and it had been successful.

I chuckled every time I thought of it. A young punk with peach fuzz for a beard, and he knew something about sex that all the experts of two independent races of man didn't know.

The oldest science, the oldest art, thoroughly explored before the dawn of written history. Outstanding authorities in every age. Casanova, Kinsey . . . But never a new discovery, a pushing out to a new frontier of sex—until now!

You can well imagine the excitement all over the base the next morning. Every man from private first class to first lieutenant was asking for a three-day pass, effective just as soon as word came on how Carr had done it.

Every TV station on Eridania was broadcasting a playback of the heart, breath, and map screens, with running commentary by noted sex experts. The subether was hypervibing to all the occupied planets in the galaxy, and since, as you know, the velocity of a hypervibe is infinite, we were getting back the reports of draft boards snowed under with volunteers for Eridania, something absolutely unheard of before.

Overnight Nlanya and Jason had captured the undivided attention of fifteen quadrillion people on two thousand planets. Rebroadcasts of the doctor entering their hotel room, the closed door, and the closed door suddenly bursting open and an excited doctor jumping up and down in the hall and shouting, "He *DID* it! He *DID* it!"

It was more than a world gone mad. It was an entire galaxy gone mad. Heavily guarded, Nlanya and Jason went through their wedding

day. At two in the afternoon, the earliest that the ultra-sensitive pregnancy tests could show anything, it was announced Nlanya was probably pregnant. At three-thirty it was a certainty. At five they were married.

Ten Eridanian reporters had been hospitalized, four of them d.o.a. cases, for trying to get the first exclusive interview on Jason's secret—with-out having succeeded. Only by then it had become Jason's Secret.

And a hundred thousand Pfc's, Sgt's, and Lt's, with three-day passes clutched in sweating hands, and a corresponding number of Eridanian girls, waited for the first word on *Jason's Secret*.

Then the blow fell.

It fell out of a clear sky, with no warning, leaving stunned dismay in its wake. Minutes later, three-day passes littered the streets of the post, abandoned like parimutuel tickets after the races.

On a thousand planets throughout the galaxy mobs that had been storming draft board offices slunk away. In

ten million newspaper offices over the galaxy where the presses had been ready to roll, and four inch block letters spelled out *JASON'S SECRET* for the headline, and a two column six inch center block had been left open for insertion of that news, the projected *EXTRA* was cancelled.

The Galactic Board had stamped Jason's Secret top bracket. "For the preservation of the status quo, more particularly as it applies between the Eridanians and Earthlings," the proclamation stated.

A top news analyst took the proclamation apart word by word and came to the conclusion that no girl could ever resist a man possessing Jason's Secret.

Whether that is so or not, the fact remains that Jason's Secret has taken its place permanently alongside such other top bracket material as "The Nature of Reality" and "How to Destroy the Universe."

So there you are, and if you are unhappy about it, think of me, brother. Think of me.

THE END



THE THOUSAND-DOLLAR WISH

By JACK MILTON

If anybody ever comes along and offers to grant your fondest wish, perhaps you'd better think it over and then tell him, "Thanks, but I've got everything I need."

JOE HANFORD fished in his pockets and came up with one skinny dime. He flipped it thoughtfully. This was Thursday, and tomorrow was payday. What it came down to was simple—ride the bus tonight and walk to work in the morning, or walk home now and be luxurious in the morning.

Luxurious, hah! Daisy was the luxurious one, with the new convertible that had got him in this fix. Joe shrugged—he couldn't be really angry with Daisy. He was luckier than he'd had any right to be, getting a fresh, pert, lovely creature like Daisy to marry an old fogey like him. What if she did like more nice things than he could afford—look at the nice thing he had in her.

He flipped the dime again, and lurched as a burly, rushing man bumped him so that he stumbled off the curb. He jumped back just in time to avoid a swerving taxi—and

watched his dime roll straight into the sewer grating.

That settled that — he'd walk both ways. His luck, Joe thought dismally, was just all gone. And tomorrow when he left work he'd do it knowing that there was no point in ever coming back again, after 20 years of being the most reliable accountant Fairfax had ever had. And all for a lousy thousand dollars that the company owed him five times over, considering the slave wages they paid him.

Joe sighed heavily, and started towards home, his eyes unseeing, his thoughts a bleak gray blur. . . .

If only I'd had the guts to get out of there and get another job ten years ago . . . they owed me the thousand dollars . . . it wasn't really stealing . . . Daisy had to have the car to keep her head up in her bridge crowd . . . everything would be all right if I could just get it back by quit-

ting time tomorrow . . . they'd never find out it had been gone, in the week-end audit . . . if only I'd had the guts to get out of there ten years ago, get a decent job . . . who'll hire an old man of fifty? . . . maybe they won't send me to jail but they'll fire me, and then what will Daisy do? . . . she's sure to leave me . . . if I could only get a thousand dollars somewhere . . .

"You can! Any problem you have can be solved if you know the secret of the Church of the Ultimate Light!"

Joe stopped in his tracks and looked around him wildly. He saw that he was standing in front of the old Veterans Hall, and that he was surrounded by curious passersby listening to the electric, commanding voice coming from a battered speaker over the doorway. On each side of the doorway hung intricately embroidered gold and silver and black flags, showing the world held in the palm of a giant hand, with a whirling halo around it made from an infinite number of electric sparks.

"I say to you," the voice went on, "you can! No matter what your worries, what your self-doubts, you can defeat them, you can be the master

of your soul! Come in now, and learn the secret of the Ultimate Light. . . ."

Nuts, Joe thought, *that's just another one of those phonies.*

It was funny, though, the way the voice had seemed to be talking just to him, answering his question. . . . Maybe—no! There couldn't be anything in it.

On the other hand, what could he lose by going in for a few minutes? He wasn't in any real hurry to get home to Daisy, to spend the evening looking at her and knowing that tomorrow he was going to lose her, and everything else worthwhile.

He went in.

And it was sort of impressive inside, the way they had the place fixed up. If you did not know it was just another crazy cult thing, you might almost . . . Forget that. Listen to the guy speak a minute, and get out.

The place was pretty full, but there was little noise. The walls were hung in thick velvety drapes, black, picked out in silver and gold designs like those on the flags outside. Even in the dim light from the torches on the platform, the haloed worlds in the gigantic hands stood out sharply—almost as though they

were living worlds, in living hands. . . .

A very tall, very thin man with a long sharp face and very bright eyes, strode to the front of the platform, and raised his hands. He wore a plain, straight robe of something black and soft, and there were whirling electric particles on it here and there that gave the impression that the robe was alive and constantly moving, shifting. But that, Joe thought, must be an illusion. . . .

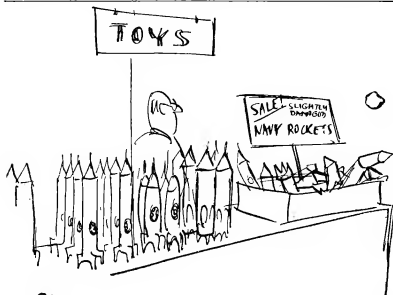
"Men and women of this world," the man said, his voice not strong but somehow alive and pulsing in Joe's

ears, working inside him as though the voice were speaking directly to him alone, and becoming part of him, and the words it said becoming the words of his own mind speaking to him. . . .

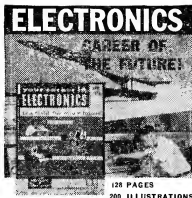
There was absolute stillness in the large room now, and the man went on:

"I am here to bring you a basic truth. It is a truth basic to this world, and to the universe. It is a truth which can change your lives, and can indeed change the universe as we now know it.

"This is the truth I bring you: There is no power in existence anywhere as great as



B. Linn



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ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY
One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

the power of the human mind. I ask you to think about that for a moment—think of what it means. . . . I will tell you one thing it means right now—it means that if you think hard enough, and steadily enough, and with full belief in the power of your own mind, you can cause to happen anything that you want to happen. If there is anything you need, and you want it badly enough, and have the strength of will, of concentration, you can *think* that thing into your possession."

The speaker continued, but Joe stopped listening. There was something invincibly *right* about what he'd heard, and what he'd heard gave him the answer to his own problem.

In a daze, he stood up and walked out onto the street. He turned his feet toward home, and his mind was churning. Before, he'd been walking in a gray daze—now he walked with his mind lit up as though it were illuminated directly by the energy of the sun.

I need a thousand dollars, he thought, *and I need it before the end of my lunch hour tomorrow. I will have the thousand dollars before the end of my lunch hour tomorrow. I will then put it back in*

the company safe, and I will be able to fix the books in two easy minutes. . . . I will have the thousand dollars and everything will be different from now on. I may get promoted to head accountant—no, don't think of that now. I will have the thousand dollars. . . . I will have—

"Hey, Joe! Where're you going?"

Joe looked up and around, and found he had walked three doors past his house. Charlie Green was hanging over the fence, leaning on a rake and looking at him curiously.

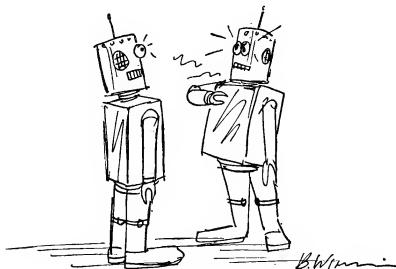
"I will have the—" Joe

started, and then realized suddenly what he was saying. "Uh, that is—hi, Charlie. I, uh—I guess I was thinking about something. Getting absent-minded. . . ."

The exhilaration was still with him, though, when he kissed Daisy.

"Joe Hanford, have you been drinking?" she asked him. "Because if you have any extra money for stopping off in low dives, I want you to know that we need new drapes, and we need them more than you need whiskey!"

But she wasn't really angry—Joe could tell, because she gave him another kiss and a



"My inventor can lick your inventor."

smile. Daisy had very fine smiles, and she gave *very* nice kisses. . . .

Anyway, in his new-found confidence, Joe had an answer for her.

"Well, you run on down to Sloan's and charge some tomorrow, honey," he told her. And her happy reaction took his mind momentarily off his program for steady, wilfull, concentrated thinking.

He got back to it, though, and went to sleep that night lulled by the soft whispering of his subconscious, repeating *I will have the thousand dollars . . . I will have . . .*

He walked to work in the morning briskly, confidently—least on the outside. Inside, he wasn't *quite* so sure that he had the answer.

Not that he'd given up, or stopped thinking steadily of his problem—but mixed in with the refrain were little sidewise thoughts about how he had never been a very strong person. . . . He had never even been a really good accountant, and he seemed to make mistakes a little more frequently than he used to. He shouldn't really have taken the money, even if he did think he'd been underpaid all these years. After all that, could he be strong enough

now to *think* his way into the money he needed?

But somehow, as the morning work dragged by, and the thousand dollars did not appear in his pocket, his growing desperation only caused him to repeat more and more intensely the magic words—*I will have the thousand dollars. . . .*

And then it was noon, time for lunch, and only one hour left for the miracle. As he walked to the cashier's office to pick up his weekly pay check, it suddenly occurred to him that maybe he hadn't been thinking specifically enough—and he changed the refrain to . . . *I will have the thousand dollars in time. . . .*

Betty Yost gave him a funny look when she handed him his envelope, and Joe realized he must have been concentrating so hard that it was noticeable. Well, that did not matter—only one thing mattered now.

And from somewhere he abruptly had the feeling that he was going to get his thousand dollars.

He went back to his desk, figuring he might as well endorse his check there before taking it to the bank, and excitement was rising in him. He was *sure* he was going to get it.

And he did. It was in the envelope containing his pay check, and it was the first thing he saw when he opened it. "Pay to the order of Joseph Hanford . . . One Thousand Dollars," it said. Relief and joy and confidence spread through him like a rising tide, and he didn't even stop to wonder for at least a minute.

Then he noticed the little colored slip of paper between the big check and his regular pay check. And as he read it,

everything was clear, and all of his true beliefs about himself were justified, and the world tipped crazily in somebody's giant hand. . . .

This is to inform you that your services will no longer be required by the Fairfax Company. The enclosed pay check includes two weeks extra salary in lieu of notice, and the amount due you from the employees' trust fund established six years ago is also herewith paid in full. . . .

THE END

WE'RE THINKING OF CHANGING OUR NAME TO—

(Continued from page 5)

Into Print. We got the idea this morning when an editor from a book publishing house called up for permission to reprint the cover of the February 1928 issue in a book they're putting out. Hope the book sells well.

According to Walter Winchell, the author of *Purple People Eater* has raked in over \$200,000 so far; which may go to prove that it isn't what you write but who likes it that counts.

Letters commenting (pro and con) on the special Shaver Mystery issue of *Fantastic* (July) have broken all incoming records for this office. Some real scorchers, too. Cries of anguish—*What are you doing to our magazine?* Answer—*We're back to normal.*

ACCORDING TO YOU...

Dear Editor:

After reading the last two issues of *Fantastic* I felt I had to make a few comments on your excellent magazine. I had thought this sort of thing was gone from the American scene. Since the passing of *Weird Tales* I haven't read a new supernatural horror story. But things are looking up when a magazine can feature such old masters as Robert Bloch and Eric Frank Russell.

Mr. Russell's articles are interesting and informative and would make a fine book. I admire him for not indulging in any fantastic theorizing. Robert Bloch has always been a favorite of mine since he turned out that classic "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper." His use of simple words to move a story along at a fast pace is almost a trade mark with him. His characters are real and spiced with a sense of humor. It is only when he descends to the very worst Lovecraft-M.P. Shiel method of describing his horrors that he falls short of perfection. Horrors must be seen out of the corner of the eye to retain their full force. (But don't get me wrong, I'm crazy about Lovecraft and Shiel at their best.)

I'd like to see a few of the old-fashioned E. F. Benson—M. R. Jones type stories.

Peter J. Maurer
818 S. Jefferson St.
Hastings, Mich.

● *Mr. Russell's articles are a book. Title: "Great World Mysteries." Printed in England. Not distributed in the U. S.*

Dear Editor:

In America since two years, I discovered your magazine in January. By golly! What a wonderful gift for a Frenchman like me which found in your pages a lot of fine stories and beautiful drawings. I liked very much the novelette titled: "Hungarian Rhapsody." I like too the illustrations of Virgil Finlay. . . . I believed to see again an old picture: "Dracula's Daughter." A touch of Lovecraft is coming in your strange story "Terror in Cut-Throat Cove," it was really weird. But I do not understand completely "The Madder They Come." What is it exactly? A story for psychopaths or a mad story for mad only with broom and without broom? I shall like, as say one reader of yours, I shall like to see an Edgar Rice Burroughs adventure. In France when I was a teenager, I read "Pellucidar and Le Conquerant de la Planete Mars" (John Carter of Mars) and after Bradbury, Matheson, Brown and many others captain Rice Bur-

roughs stay always a pioneer of science fiction and even today some writers follow his line. Hamilton, for example. Fantasy is coming too with "The Illegitimate Egg" and "Genie Takes a Wife." For that Scherazade will say in French indeed *Bravo! C'est magnifique!* You must go in this way, fantastic science fiction, and light and humorous touch. It's the best. Excuse me for my English, but perhaps my Parisian accent is worse.

Lucien Delforge

Professor at Sainte Catherine de Portneuf

Comte de Portneuf, Quebec, Canada

● *As editor of Amazing Stories, your letter does me honor, sir, and there is no need to ask apology for your English. You should hear my French. If I wrote you in that language I would be happy if my letter reflected half the enthusiasm of yours. Write again.*

Dear Editor:

Since I was very uncomplimentary in my letter to the latest *Fantastic* I shall try to be complimentary in this issue. No more letter prizes—good! The "Classic Corner" good! Now maybe you can reprint some Burroughs. I can't even find a letter to argue with in this issue.

Ted Pauls

1448 Meridene Dr.

Baltimore 12, Md.

● *Thanks for the compliments, Ted, but don't make it a habit. Gripe once in a while. If we suddenly lost all our dissenters we'd get real lonesome.*

Dear Editor:

I just finished reading the June issue of *Fantastic* and I thought it was great. "The Thing Beneath the Bay" was by far the best story in this issue and one of the best you have had in a long time.

Keep up the fact articles such as "The Ship That Vanished."

"The Man Who Took It With Him" has the kind of ending I like in a story.

"The Madder They Come," "Neosho's Choicest," and "Hungarian Rhapsody" were okay but the latter didn't hold my interest too well.

"Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" was a little too preposterous to suit me but fantastic stories are what you print so I guess I don't have to read it again if I don't want to.

Lanny Stiles

204 North Broadway

Carl Junction, Missouri

● *"The Thing . . ." was our favorite also.*

Dear Editor:

"Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" was very good from beginning to end, a compliment to *Fantastic*. What struck me as the best of this story is Mr. Bloch's descriptive ability. If ever an author had the ability to put his feelings on paper, this one has it. Few authors can make the reader feel as if he or she were living the story and feeling it the way Robert Bloch has done in this story.

"The Thing Beneath the Bay" another story from the June issue was tops. It was weird, fantastic, beautiful and very well written. It's a story that one remembers for a long time.

Mrs. Marie Steele
5635 Prange
St. Louis 20, Mo.

● *Take it easy boosting Bob, Mrs. Steele. He'll start howling for more money.*

Dear Ed:

You have flipped this time! How on earth can you compare a living thing as the devil to a robot? A robot could never be as cunning as the living devil. And to compare Michael, The Angel of the Lord, to a robot is sheer fantastic.

How could one man forced into talking with Lucifer be so calm as Stanton was? I would like to meet the woman in real life that has the grit that Leda had. Very few men in today's world could have resisted the temptation that was offered John Stanton. But, actually, I'll have to admit that it was a very good story.

The story "Neosho's Choicest" just goes to prove that a family really isn't a family without children. I think that the men in that story made a very hard and wise choice. It truly would soon be an extinct world without bringing more kids into it.

What was the gist in "Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" or was there any? I thought it was a lousy story. A thing coming out of the sea and getting bigger and bigger there just wasn't any sense to the whole story.

How about running something in *Fantastic* along the lines of real suspense. I read "Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" directly before going to bed and I didn't even have a trace of a nightmare.

Larry E. Neal
2133 N. Talbot
Indianapolis, Indiana

● *If your reference to Michael, The Archangel implies irreverence on our part, we wish to deny any such intent and to extend apologies for unintentional offense in that direction.*

Dear Ed:

Surely your June issue stories were not the *best* obtainable! They were dripping with sea water and I detected a strong flavor of corn also. However, corn and all, *now*, I am not so contented living near a bay as I was *before* reading "The Thing Beneath the Bay." I must admit, that in my opinion, it was the best of the bunch. But tell me, what's wrong with Matheson? I've liked everything he has written. I think most of us like fantastic stories that border or encompass science fiction and vice versa. Eh?

Another thing . . . you said, in answering Mrs. Ward's letter, that you think "the surest way to lose readers is to try to uplift them, educate them, inspire them, prepare them—everything but entertain them." While I, too, disagree with Mrs. Ward, I ask you, have you *ever* read a fine entertaining story that didn't do any of the other four things in at least a small degree?

Nobody ever mentions cartoons. I like them more subtle, myself, but don't stop.

And by the way, the new Classified section we'll have in *Fantastic* sounds real good. The rates are a bargain and I'm looking forward to it.

Mrs. K. L. Johnson
Box 232
Bacliff, Texas

● *You're right about the "other four things" being commendable, Mrs. Johnson—so long as entertainment is the main objective and comes first.*

Dear Editor:

It's always a pleasure to see a Robert Bloch story in your magazine and his "Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" was very good.

I think this story can be used to illustrate the argument going on between you and some of your readers concerning "entertainment" vs. "education" in science fiction and fantasy. You, as editor, bought the story because you felt it was highly entertaining, yet when I read it I was also educated. I learned things about pirates, Caribbean history, skin-diving and human psychology.

When Bloch writes a story he can't help but put in bits of information that give it an aura of reality. Bloch is so good a writer that his characters' actions and words give the reader a graphic education in human motivation. It is these details, this background, which performs the function of "education." But I'll agree with you in that "education" should not be an aim in writing a story. Rather, the instruction should be an unlooked for by-product of plausibility.

"Terror in Cut-Throat Cove" entertained me handsomely, and

you put it in the lead-off position, and perhaps had a cover painted to go with it, because you felt it would do just that. And yet, it was also instructive. I'm grateful to Bloch for the things I learned as well as for the entertainment I enjoyed. Could it be that the best stories are naturally a balance of entertainment and unobtrusive education, and that hardly any story ever published is made up of pure entertainment as opposed to pure education? Also, isn't it unrealistic to separate these two factors into black and white extremes?

Richard E. Geis
19 Wave Crest Ave.
Venice, Calif.

● *Bob Bloch is one of our regulars, now. He has some of his best yarns coming up.*

Dear Editor:

The stories in the June issue were fairly interesting. I find the light kind of fantasy more interesting than the nameless horror type. I believe that it is easier to enjoy a light fantasy in the manner of *Unknown*, than a heavy fantasy in the manner of *Weird Tales*. It is my hope that you will get some of the writers who used to write for the former.

I find myself disagreeing with a letter-writer over a criticism of your magazine, and this very rarely occurs. While I enjoy reading *Fantastic* it has faults, but in the case of the criticism advanced by Mrs. William Ward, you are right, and she is wrong.

There are several reasons for her being wrong: She appears to be working on the assumption that the circulation of any s-f magazine is in the millions. This isn't true. One of the top circulations reached by an s-f magazine was 100,000. Not very much in terms of the many millions of people inhabiting our country. With circulations of this type, it must be obvious that not many people are buying s-f. Magazine circulation in the s-f field today appears to be going up instead of down. The 100,000 people who comprise the circulation of a s-f magazine will be people who buy that magazine pretty steadily. Under the present conditions in the s-f field, if these people buy more than one magazine each month, they will get a pretty fair sampling of the field. By now, any change occurring in the type of stories (i.e. making them more educational) will not affect them one bit. And there are very few new readers attracted to the field of s-f, so if you turn educational, you educate about ten people.

The main reason for not changing to an educational policy, from the editor's point of view, would be the fact that you would sell con-

siderably less magazines. Since Mrs. Ward will not believe me otherwise, I had better give examples. *Science Fiction Plus*, which was a throwback to the old educational and scientific kind of s-f magazine, folded after a very small amount of issues. Less than ten. The original *Amazing* sold fairly well under Gernsback at the beginning, started to lose circulation just a few years after it switched its owners from Gernsback to Teck. It is significant that Teck Publications kept up the same educational viewpoint that Gernsback had. It is also significant that *Amazing* reached its largest circulation when it switched to a policy of pure entertainment . . .

Now I rest my case against Mrs. Ward, or more accurately against her particular philosophy.

As far as the cover and interior illustrations go, well, the cover is going to set up Valigursky, if his past covers have not done so, as a rival to the title of the late Earl Bergey. Bergey wasn't very good. The interiors weren't as good as they could be, Virgil Finlay is getting worse and worse. Or, anyway, sloppier and sloppier.

Andrew Joel Reiss
741 Westminster Rd.
Brooklyn 30, N. Y.

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LARGE Record collection accumulated by 18-year-old girl, interested in tennis, dancing and bowling. Write to: Luanne Chirico, 1-40 Hartley Place, Fair Lawn, New Jersey.

VIEW Cards, stamps and photos collected by a building contractor, age 24. Write to: Mr. Jose A. Andrada, #1 Lumanangan, Bauang, La Union, Philippine Islands.

COINS And stamps collected by James Boskey, 15 years old, founder of the Pingry School S-F club. Write at: 19 Colony Drive East, West Orange, New Jersey.

PRE-WORLD WAR II Record collection has been accumulated by 18-year-old Bob Bidwell. He also wishes to hear from s-f fans in Gulf Islands area and all over the world to start a s-f club. Write Box 216, Ganges, B. C., Canada.

LIBRARY Of s-f books, 60 hard-bound, and 20 paper-bound, collected by Phil Harrell, student, age 22. For info on this large library write at: 2632 Vincent Avenue, Norfolk 9, Virginia.

PEN PALS

STUDY Of planets, and flying saucers interests pen pal Kenneth Good, 352 Brould Street, Terre Hill, Pennsylvania.

ANTHONY Juskewitch, 42 years old wishes to correspond with science-fiction fans. Write at Box 602, Rumford, Maine.

STUDENT Interested in reading and writing, sports, and science wishes to correspond with s-f enthusiasts. Gloria Taylor, 100-10 32nd Avenue, East Elmhurst 69, New York.

SAILOR 18, blonde, wishes to correspond with fans his age. Write: R.D.S.A. Gary G. Bowers, Box 105 USNSC, Treasure Island, San Francisco, California.

HUNTING And fishing enthusiast interested in s-f literature and music wishes to correspond with fans. Write: Mrs. Shirley Ogden, c/o Dupuis Lumber Mill, Plains, Montana.

Britain's Sceptre Tunes Up
Photo by Beken of Cowes



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